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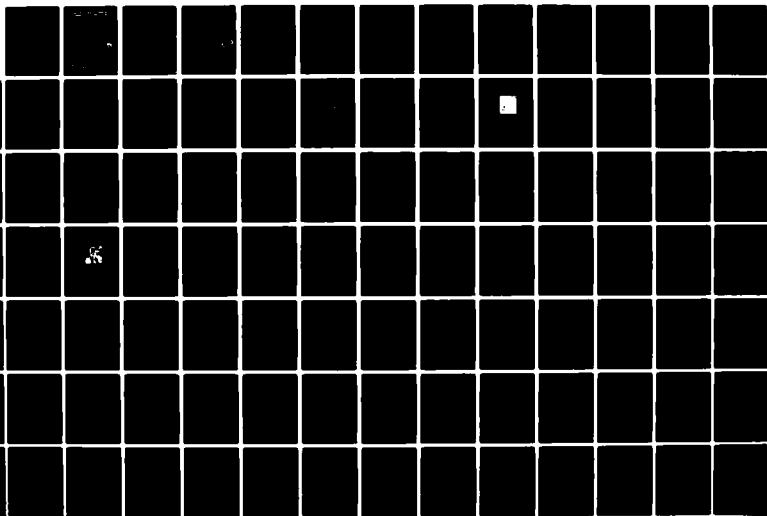
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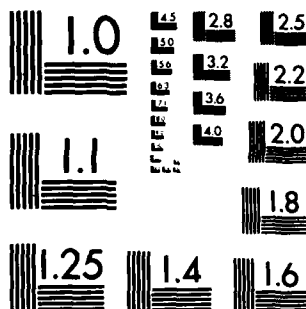
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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS
TOMBIGBEE HISTORIC TOWNSITES PROJECT
AD A127389

Volume 1
(Interview Numbers 100-102)



Compiled by:
James M. McClurken
and
Peggy Uland Anderson
with an Introduction by
James M. McClurken

Submitted by:
Dr. Charles E. Cleland
and
W. Lee Minnerly
The Museum
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan



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PREFACE

The Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project program in oral history is one aspect of an interdisciplinary search effort in the study of the Colbert, Barton, and Vinton townsites in Clay County, Mississippi. These three townsites lie within the one hundred and thirty-five mile long Tombigbee River Multi-resource District and were a part of the mitigation of significant cultural resources in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), Executive order 11593, and Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act (Public Law 93-291). This research along with intensive archival and archaeological studies was performed under contract with the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Southwest Region, for the U.S. Army Engineers, Mobile District Corps of Engineers in partial fulfillment of contract C-07026.

Oral historical research was conducted in conjunction with archaeological and archival investigations during the field season of October 1979 through August 1980. Research and interviews focused on eastern Clay County and the southern portion of Monroe County, Mississippi in an effort to gather resource data pertaining to lifeways, material culture, social organization, settlement patterns and numerous related topics. The transcriptions in these volumes are the product of the initial phases of data collection and have been processed in a manner designed to make this data accessible to a larger audience. Included are biographical sketches of informants, transcriptions of taped interviews edited by the interviewers and corrected by the informants, pertinent photos of people and places in the townsites region, as well as informants' sketch maps and drawings of townsite structures. Volume eight contains an index of topics adapted

from the Yale Human Relations Area Files Cultural Materials Outline as well as a separate index of persons who appear in the text. Two locational maps of structures on and around the townsites are included in volume one to clarify and illustrate portions of the text.

One essential element for the success of any oral history program is the cooperation of those persons who are able to provide information on and contact with potential informants. The Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project Oral History Program is greatly indebted to many persons in Clay and Monroe Counties for their guidance in our endeavor. Team members have been guests in hundreds of homes and the recipients of the finest hospitality. To those members of the Clay County Historical Society and the Monroe County Historical Society who provided the first contacts with former Vinton and Barton residents, we owe special thanks.

Any success which this program has had or will have in the future, we owe to our informants who patiently answered even the seemingly most unimportant questions. The frank, detailed, often personal information and insights which they have provided during the months of fieldwork form the text of these volumes and preserve for future generations the stories of a way of life that will soon be lost. There were no interviews that we did not enjoy doing, and no homes in which we did not receive far more than we will be able to repay. To our informants, we offer our most sincere thanks.

The parts of an history program which take place behind office walls are the most tedious chores, and there are many of them. First to receive thanks are those with the most thankless jobs. Vicky Od'Neal and Jean Swetz skillfully typed corrected and revised manuscripts and made our office a pleasant place to be. Betty Mitson provided technical assistance

at the opening of our project and contributed several interviews of Monroe County residents. Bess Carrick logged many hours of darkroom time on our project's behalf. Don Dickerson and Chet Trout of the MSU Museum created the cover design for these volumes.

The oral history program benefited many times by the helpful suggestions of Dr. Stephanie Rodiffer of the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, and both Jerry Neilson and Charles Moorehead of the Mobile District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Dr. Bernard Gallin, Dr. Moreau Maxwell and Dr. William Lovis of the Michigan State University, Department of Anthropology, also offered guidance in the preparation of these volumes. To all of these persons who made this project work, we express our thanks.

Dr. Charles E. Cleland
W. Lee Minnerly
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

INTRODUCTION

James M. McClurken

The Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project Oral History Program was one part of an interdisciplinary investigation of the extinct towns of Colbert, Barton, and Vinton, three nineteenth-century townsites located in the extreme eastern portion of Clay County, Mississippi. Oral historical, archival, and archaeological investigations were conducted simultaneously to gather data from which a picture of the towns and of the lifeways of their inhabitants could be reconstructed. The combination of these three disciplines in the study of local history and broader anthropological works has been found particularly useful in recent decades as historical archaeology has expanded its interests to include nineteenth and twentieth century sites. Schuyler (1978:290) whose own work uses the same combination of data gathering techniques at Sandy Ground, a nineteenth-century oystering community on Staten Island, recognizes that all three disciplines contribute unique perspectives. He characterizes oral history as a bridge between documentary history and ethnography which preserves both emic and etic information, or the views and beliefs which informants hold about themselves and information which an investigator gathers from direct or indirect observations. The use of the three combined approaches, he believes, may serve as a means of conducting a "fuller type of archaeology," gathering information which each discipline can provide and combining perspectives to address problems which may be solved with evidence from all three sources. This approach has been used at numerous sites including investigations at Mott Farm (Brown 1978), the Supply Mill on Content Brook in Massachusetts (Schuyler and Mills 1976), the Dolores Project in southwest Colorado (Duranceau 1980), and more recently at the Waverly Plantation located south of the Colbert, Barton, and Vinton townsites in Clay County, Mississippi (Adams 1980).

It was the goal of the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project to gather data which were available in the archaeological, archival, and oral historical records. During the fieldwork period which extended from October 1979 to August 1980, the oral historians interacted regularly with archaeolo-

gists and archivists to direct investigations in a manner mutually beneficial and complimentary to each discipline and to gather and exchange historical and ethnographic data on a wide range of topics relating to Colbert, Barton, Vinton, and their residents. The specific task of the program was to locate and systematically interview persons who were themselves or whose families were connected with the townsites and to produce a series of written documents which contributed data for interpretation of archaeological and archival materials. The transcripts in these volumes represent the final product of this data gathering phase.

The recorded history of the townsites begins in the 1830s. Colbert, the earliest of the three towns, occupied the entire Fractional Section 6, Township 17, Range 8 East of the Chickasaw Meridian. By 1835, the town had been platted and contained one hundred blocks which were subdivided into lots. In April of 1836, steps were taken to improve the town, including the development of roads to connect with previously existing routes. The Colbert Post Office was established in March 1835. Elliott (1978:50) characterizes Colbert as a typical river trade town, "A shipping point for cotton and a receiving point for trade goods, the location of stores, churches, schools, physicians, and craftsmen." The town was chartered in 1846 and an election of town officers was to be held in May of that year. One of the important services of Colbert was the ferry on which considerable traffic had developed across the Tombigbee River. Colbert, however, was built on a floodplain and the town suffered the devastating effects of a major flood in 1847, following which its population rapidly dwindled and those remaining looked elsewhere for commercial services.

Barton, established on higher ground in Fractional Section 31, Township 16, Range 8 East, directly north of Colbert, began assuming the functions of the earlier town by 1848. In that year, a ferry was chartered which moved traffic through the new town, and the post office was moved from Colbert, adopting the name of its new location. In 1849, the voting precinct was moved to Barton. At the time of the 1850 census the town had an estimated one hundred and ten residents and their slaves (Elliott, 1978:57). The town was platted and sold to a trustee for the stockholders in 1851. Also in 1851, the previous ferry was abolished and a new one was established at a place known as Jackson Springs. This ferry continued

well into the 1900s and became a focal point for the memories of our informants. Like Colbert, Barton functioned as a service center and shipping point in the basically agricultural economy. The town included stores, a hotel, two cotton warehouses, a church, school, tavern, private dwellings and several physicians. By 1857, the Mobile and Ohio Railroad had extended north from Mobile to reach the town of West Point in central Clay County, and with this new means of transporting goods, traffic was drawn from the Tombigbee contributing to the general decline of Barton as a service center.

Vinton was located less than one mile north of Barton in Fractional Section 36, Township 16, Range 7 East, and its early history parallels that of Barton. A ferry was in operation by 1847 with an associated warehouse and cotton shed by 1851, at which time the name "Vinton property" appears. By the mid-1850s, Vinton was a small but unplatted town with a store, blacksmith shop, lumber houses, a church, Masonic Lodge, warehouse, ferry, and cemetery. The post office was moved from Barton to Vinton and was again renamed after its new location in 1858. In 1862, the voting precinct was moved from Barton to Vinton, as well. Although the railroad continued to vie with river transportation as a means of shipping cotton, Vinton remained a center for shipping until the last decades of the 1800s.

The picture of the townsites as non-agrarian, service oriented centers as they are presented in the archival records differs greatly from the memories of our informants. The town of Colbert passed from the memories of most local residents a generation or more ago. Barton at its time of peak activity in the 1850s is also beyond the range of informants' memories. It is primarily remembered for its location as the ferry where people went for their Sunday picnics or for the shaky vehicle on which they crossed the river on their way to Columbus. Vinton has become known as an agricultural community, most noted for its school and cemetery. By the early childhood of all but our oldest informants, the cotton gin, church, store, blacksmith shop and the post office at Vinton were gone and the major services were those which one neighbor or family member provided to another. Many of the informants, however, were born in and grew to adulthood in structures associated with the towns of Barton and Vinton, and many detailed accounts of their memories are presented in these transcripts. Family lore and history present an image of earlier life in the townsites area, while the first-hand accounts of informants provide insights on local

life from 1890 to roughly 1930. While a wide range of topics are discussed in these transcripts, most of the information deals with a rural way of life and farming, at the same time describing the Vinton, Barton, and Colbert townsites as they were within each informant's lifetime and span of memory.

A total of fifty informants contributed to the sixty-five transcripts prepared for and presented in this collection. One additional interview with Mr. Van Howard, Sr. was conducted in 1958 by Les Campbell of WROB Radio of West Point, Mississippi as a part of a radio program on local history for the West Point centennial. The transcription of this interview appears through the courtesy of WROB and was included with the oral history project's interviews because of its direct bearing on the site of Vinton.

The first month of the oral history project fieldwork concentrated on locating persons who had lived in the Colbert, Barton, and Vinton areas or whose families had direct contact with the communities. Attempts were made to select informants from both the black and white races, both sexes and all social levels represented in the townsites area. The total sample included eighteen white females, seventeen white males, nine black males and six black females. Their ages ranged from ninety-two to forty-eight. Because many locally born men and women married and remained in the townsites area, interviews were conducted with six pairs of husbands and wives with each spouse being questioned separately but along similar lines of inquiry. The majority of interviews were conducted within a ten mile radius of the townsites. Attempts were made to identify and locate descendants of early settlers through archival documents. Descendants of the original settlers of the townsites area, who still reside in the area, were interviewed. In two instances where descendants were located outside of Mississippi and were contacted by mail, they were able to provide no information on the townsites. Several additional interviews were conducted in neighboring Monroe County to add to lifeways material in the townsites area. More than one hundred potential informants were contacted during the first month of the data collection period. Those persons who contributed to the work were in a real sense involved in the program from start to finish, working with the interviewers throughout the interviewing and transcription process.

Oral historical inquiries were guided by a general format and by pre-defined problem domains which were coordinated with those being investigated by archaeologists and project archivists. The interviewers first solicited biographical and genealogical data on the informant in order to place the testimony within a social context and to contribute to the demographic data. Informants were then questioned on details relating to the major topics of settlement, subsistence, economic systems, social structure, and transportation. Whenever appropriate, researchers sought material culture information for Colbert, Barton, and Vinton and often received detailed descriptions of town layout, architecture and construction of dwellings, businesses, and public buildings. In many instances, they succeeded in gathering such specific information as the style of door hinge used in a particular structure. Information on human activity and its effect on the landscape of the townsites was also solicited and informants often provided accounts of events and persons responsible for present day features. The interview techniques used in the gathering of data allowed each interview to follow a more natural course, drawing more fully upon the total resources of each interviewee. Rather than limiting inquiries to a set of questions and short answers, more in-depth discussions of rural southern society were sought in order to present a more complete information base for further investigations.

All transcription of these interviews was completed in the field. Immediately following each session, the tapes were returned to the oral history offices and assigned an oral history number which appears on the title page of each transcript. Pertinent background information, including notes taken during an interview session were filed, and the work of transcription began. The original transcript was copied verbatim from the tape recordings. Each transcript was then returned to the interviewer who audit checked the copy by comparing the taped and transcribed forms of the interview for accurate duplication. The transcription was then edited.

The goal in preparing these final volumes was not to create verbatim transcriptions but to produce logical and readable documents which preserve the original interviews' content and flavor. In keeping with this policy, all transcripts were edited for clarity of script. For the most part, editing consisted of correcting mechanical errors which occurred during

transcription. In some instances, changes were made in the text itself. Redundant statements and false starts were removed whenever they appeared. Statements which were not completed but appeared to be important to the understanding of the text were completed by the interviewer and bracketed for informant approval. In several instances, at the request of the informant, more substantial editing of transcripts was done. In these cases, changes were made in the grammatical structure. Names and phrases which the informants wished deleted were removed from the text.

When these operations were completed, the transcription was again sent to the typist who prepared a second copy incorporating any corrections made by the editor. This copy was then returned to the informant who was asked to consider it carefully and to make any final corrections or additions. In most instances, the interviewer had provided questions in the margins seeking clarification of difficult passages. On this return visit, the interviewer often examined the transcript with the informant, receiving clarification of difficult and incomplete passages and approval for editorial changes. In two instances, where the informants were not able to read the transcripts themselves, the interviewer read substantial portions of the text to them. These changes, made in the script by either the editor or the informant, were then incorporated into the final text and the transcription as it appears in these volumes was typed.

The transcripts in these volumes are arranged in chronological order by each informant's first interview date. Additional interviews with the same informant are grouped with the first interview. This arrangement reflects the development of the depth and detail which resulted from follow-up interviews. The format of each follow-up session with a single informant was prepared by the interviewer after careful assessment of the session preceeding it so that each interview builds upon the prior data.

Included with each informant's contribution is a title page with a brief description of material covered in the interview, vital statistics, a photograph of the informant if available, and a list of the persons who were present at the interview session. These brief statements are intended as introductions to each of the informants. In the case of the interviews that were conducted on the sites of Vinton and Barton, the location of the interview is also noted on the title page and the approximate locations are provided within the text. Also included with several interviews are

related photographs which were provided by the informants and a series of sketches which they prepared. For the most part, these sketches are one dimensional drawings of houses or their floorplans, indicating the placement of such features as chimneys, porches, windows, and doors. Maps which were drawn by informants showing the layout of the communities as they knew them are also included.

Included in volume eight is an index to the preceeding transcripts. The topics for this index were chosen from the Yale Human Relations Area Files Cultural Materials Outline, and were selected for their applicability to the five problem domains. The definitions of the categories are given in the opening pages. In most instances, these definitions were adopted directly from the files without changes. Some categories have been expanded, however, slightly altering their original meanings. These changes are incorporated into the definitions given in our text. The structural section is the largest deviation from the Yale system. This much expanded list of information regarding structures on and around the Colbert, Barton, and Vinton townsites has been indexed for better study of settlement patterns and architectural styles. A separate index of names which appear in the transcripts has also been added. We trust that these indexes will serve as convenient research tools.

For those persons whose studies and interests require a more direct contact with the original tape recordings than these transcripts provide, copies of the original tapes, along with the transcripts, have been placed with the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress and at the Mississippi State Department of Archives and History. Copies of these transcriptions have been provided to: Alabama State Department of Archives and History; Bryan Public Library of West Point, Mississippi; Evans Memorial Library of Aberdeen, Mississippi; and with the Mobile District Corps of Engineers. The original tape recordings are housed in the Voice Library at Michigan State University, and all working materials from this project are housed at the Michigan State University Museum.

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Figure 1 Key

<u>Key #</u>	<u>Structure Name</u>	<u>THTP Structure #</u>
1	Lebanon Presbyterian Church	OS12
	Christian Church	OS12
2	Herman Cumberland Presbyterian Church	OS11
3	Jack Coleman house	OS13
4	Darracott store and doctor's office	-
5	Darracott School	OS9
6	Williams School	OS10
7	Free Grace School	OS8
	Free Grace Church	OS8
	Trinity Baptist Church	OS8
8	Andrews School	OS7
9	Bethel Baptist Church	OS7
10	Henry Watson II store	OS14
11	Dukeminier store	-
12	William Duke/Early Duke house	OS6
13	Poss house*	-
14	Willie and Jim Keaton house*	-
93	house site on Alf Ross place*	OC2
97	Funderburk/Miller house*	-
99	Shady Grove Church	OS5
100	Hayes house*	OS4
101	Waverly School*	OS3
102	Mt. Pisgah Church	OS2
103	Walter Ivy house	OS1
104	Pool/Harmon house	OS16
	Harmon Commissary	OS15
105	Wiley house	OS17
106	Wash Davis store and gin	OS18

● dwelling

▲ church

* approximate location

○ business

△ school

◐ dwelling/business

▲ church/school

▲ school/dwelling

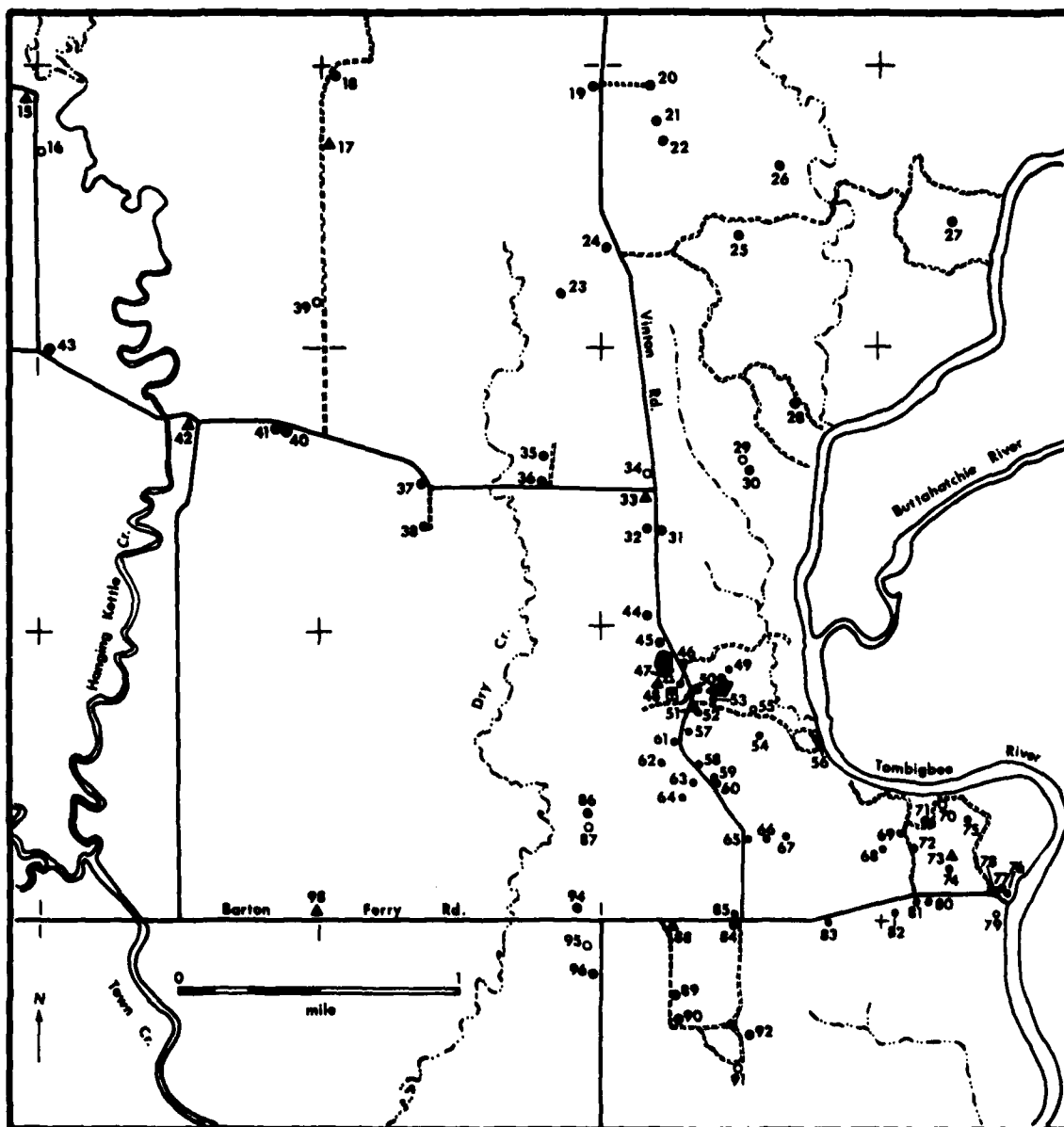


Figure 2
Structures Locality Map

Figure 2 Key

<u>Key #</u>	<u>Structure Name</u>	<u>THTP Structure #</u>
15	Concob II Church	OV36
16	Frank Morton store*	OV35
17	Concob I School	OV37
	Concob I Church	OV37
18	Howard house*	OV38
19	Ned Gibson/Howard house	OV39
20	Ab Duke house	OV40
21	Homer and Pearl Duke house*	-
22	Ed and Lilly Maude Wilson house*	-
23	Tom and Mar Brooks house*	-
24	Clay house	OV41
25	Tode Wilson/W.R. Richardson house*	OV42
26	McGraw house*	-
27	Cogsdell house*	OV43
28	Harris house on Cane Creek*	OV26
29	store and blacksmith shop on Hollins land	OV24
30	Levi Hollins/Tom Brooks house*	OV25
31	Henry Wilson house (stagecoach inn)	OV21
32	Dennis Wilson house	OV22
33	Pilgrim's Rest Church	OV23
	Vinton School II	OV23
	Vinton School III	OV23
	Vinton School as a church	OV23
34	Douglas store and gristmill	OV27
35	Benton/Bradford house	OV30
36	Grant and Ida Moore house*	OV29
37	Schrock store	OV31
	Willy Wilson house	OV28
38	Schrock house	OV32
39	Forrest Cox store*	OV33
40	Gladney house	-
41	Whatley house	-
42	relocated Concob I Church	-
43	Albert Thomas house	OV34
44	Larry Keaton/tornado house*	OV20
45	Pougar's cabin*	OV19
46	Trotter house west of Vinton road*	-
47	Vinton School I *	OV18
48	Methodist Church/Masonic Lodge*	OV17
49	Zack Wilson house*	V8
50	Vinton general store	V1
	Vinton store as a dwelling	V1
51	Vinton gin/gristmill/cotton shed	V3
52	Flim Keaton house	V7
53	Trotter/Watson/Natcher/Miller house	V2
54	house south of Trotter house*	V10

Figure 2 Key (cont.)

Key #	Structure Name	THTP Structure #
55	Vinton blacksmith shop*	V5
56	Vinton cotton slide	V6
57	Jim Moore house*	OV15
58	Bill Moore House*	-
59	Peter Montgomery house	-
60	Sy Howard house	OV16
61	Diddie Keaton house*	OV12
62	Jeff Daugherty, Jr. house*	OV13
63	Summer Moore/Bill Moore/Paul Broyle house*	OV14
64	charcoal burner's house*	-
65	Ed and Lilly Maude Wilson house	-
66	Harris/Poss/D. Keller house	OB6
67	Dobson house*	B20
68	Frank Andrews/Keller/Whaley house	B3
69	house on first ridge west of Cedar Oaks	B16
70	Barton blacksmith shop	B10
71	Cedar Oaks	B14
	Cedar Oaks as a doctor's office	B14
72	old bachelor's house	B6
73	Barton School	B11
	Perkins/Richards house	B11
74	Montgomery/Ellis/high water house	B12
75	David Keller house	B15
76	Cogsdell/Coltrane/Uithoven house	B17
77	Harris ferry house	B17
78	ferryman's shotgun house	B18
79	Barton warehouse*	B19
80	Pat Hampton house*	OB2
81	Barney Cogsdell/Trannie Wilson house	OB3
82	Natcher house*	OB4
83	Atkins/Phillips/Harris/Dobson/T. Keller house	OB5
84	Grant and Ida Moore house*	OV1
85	Andrew Shirley/Will Shirley house	OV2
86	Mitchell/Thomas house*	OV3
87	Thomas blacksmith shop*	OV4
88	London Chapel Church	OV5
89	Andrew Lenoir, Sr. house	OV6
90	Selvin Lenoir house*	OV7
91	Cox place store*	OC1
92	J. Cox house	-
94	A. Ellis/Rice/Shirley/Dukeminier/Freeman house	OV8
95	Zack Ellis store	OV9
96	Jessee Dukeminier/Zack Ellis house	OV10
98	Town Creek Church	OV11
	Town Creek School	OV11

● dwelling	○ business	○ dwelling/business
▲ church	△ school	▲ church/school
* approximate location		▲ school/dwelling

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 100 -
An interview with
A. C. Sanders

conducted and edited by
James M. McClurken



A. C. Sanders was born in Sumpter County, Alabama in 1900. He became a resident of the Vinton community in 1925 and made his living by farming and operation of the Barton Ferry. Since the Sanders family was relatively new to the Vinton area, much of the information which he provided had been told to him by his friends and neighbors. The interview is primarily biographical and reflects lifeways in the rural Vinton community in this century. The persons and places described in this interview provided a base for our research.

This interview was conducted on December 10, 1979. Present at the session were A. C. Sanders, his wife Johnnie Vaughn Sanders, and James McClurken.

M: This is an interview with Mr. A. C. Sanders for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken on December 10, 1979. This interview is being conducted in Mr. Sander's home. His address is Route 2, Box 136, West Point, Mississippi. Mr. Sander's telephone number is 494-1429.

Well, Mr. Sanders, when we began this project, a lot of people said that you were the first man that we should contact. I'd like to ask you a little bit about your early life and how you managed to come to West Point.

S: All right, sir.

M: Where were you born?

S: I was born in Sumpter County, Alabama on January 21, 1900. My daddy was just an old-fashioned, down-to-earth, dirt farmer, just a poor farmer. I was born on this little old farm, but it was just rented land. He never owned a foot of land. He always rented. I was out of a family of seven. My oldest brother died when he was seven and I was three. I remember all about it. There was a brother in between the two of us. Then came along the four girls after that. We had the scarlet fever in our home when I was three years old. My oldest brother died and the rest of us, two of us, me and the other boy had it and maybe the oldest girl. She was so little that it didn't affect her much, but the oldest boy died. I was three years old at that time, and I remember all about his death. I remember playing with him before he died--before we got sick.

M: So your memories are that clear?

S: Yes, sir. It is back there, but I can't remember something that happened a week ago. I can remember everything that happened back there, from then until I started school at seven years old. I remember starting school. I remember my first day of school and how many was in that little school down in Alabama. There was only eight of us going to school there at that time. It was a little one-teacher school, and we rode to school three miles through the muddiest road anybody ever traveled over, on a little old six-hundred-pound pony--me and my oldest brother that was living. We went to this little old school. It was a nine-month school, though. Every year we had a nine-month school. I went to school there until I got along in the upper grades.

I believe that in the seventh grade, I had to drop out a year and work on the farm, plow with mules, help make a crop and my brother went to school. The next year he dropped out, and I went to school and he'd plow. I finished the ninth grade that way. I got to full ninth grade, all they had at that time, although they taught some things back then that they don't make a special effort to teach now. We didn't have the new things that they have now, of course. They

have lots of arithmetic, reading, English, and spelling. They were my major subjects. I made good on all that and I still got it. It's right back there. (pointing to his head)

M: What brought you to this part of the country?

S: Well, it was after World War I. I went to Mobile, Alabama in July 1918; I left the farm there and went to Mobile to work in the Mobile Ship Building Company. I stayed there in that until the fall. I was about the draft age. I felt so certain that I was going to be drafted that I wanted to come home and stay awhile. I came home, stayed a little while, and the armistice was signed in 1918. When the armistice was signed, of course I didn't have to go. I did have to register at eighteen years old. Then I stayed on the farm. I don't believe that I went to school anymore. I didn't; I don't think. I went to work on the farm with my dad. Then in the last of 1920, we moved to Mississippi.

My older brother didn't go in the service either. He was ready to go but they didn't call him. He got a job on a ship in Mobile in 1919, and he took a trip across the water with the Merchant Marines. When he came home from there, the next year or so, he came up here and saw a place advertised in a paper somewhere. And we came up here, or he did, and bought this place. They was going to move up, so I moved up here with them, though, and just worked around, jobbing about, just anywhere I could get a job for a dollar a day.

M: What kind of work did you do?

S: Farm work, hauling lumber, cutting logs, just common work anybody had.

M: Was that here in the West Point area?

S: That was in the West Point area. I didn't work out on this side. I was over on the west side of town at that time. I worked some round about in town on different kinds of little old jobs, just anywhere I could work a few days to make a few dollars, earning a dollar a day. Sometimes I'd get a better job. I'd make two dollars a day. Boy, I'd jump sky high then! Well, I went along that way from the very first of 1921. I went to the cotton fields in Arkansas. I picked cotton all that fall. I made a dollar a hundred pounds and my board. I saved a few dollars.

Then the next year I worked in the logging business and lumber business hauling lumber and anything else I could get. I made a right little crop. In the fall of 1922 the railroad had a strike. I went to Columbus and worked during the railroad strike as a scab. They called me a scab but I was grasping at a straw. I didn't have anything, hardly, to do that I could make a living at. I got a job making forty cents an hour which was a good job for that day. That was in the last of August, I reckon. Along in December of that year, I married this old hen I've got here. (jokingly)

M: And your wife's name is?

S: Miss Johnnie Vaughn. She was a little country gal, I met up with over there. So I talked to her, showed her just why she ought to marry me and everything. I told her I didn't have a dollar in the world but I had a strong mind and a strong arm. She listened. I wasn't on that job very long. I went from there to a stave mill, somewhere in Columbus. I worked there awhile and then I drifted back to the farm, on the farm with her daddy. I stayed there a year, moved back over in West Point, where my people lived. I believe we brought one child over with us, and we raised all the rest of these little ones that's been raised. We've had six children. The oldest died when he was thirty-one of Hodgkin's disease. We've raised all the family right around here. And if I do say it, we haven't got any possessions to be proud of except that family. We value that family and they value us, I know.

M: How did you support your children after you came back to the area at Vinton?

S: Truck farming partly, then I got into a little dairying. We ran the county home on the west side of West Point for nine years. At that time it was called the "poorhouse," but it was the county home, either one. We stayed there, and I raised a little crop there every year, a good truck crop. We started to get a little ahead. Well, I couldn't get enough ahead to buy a farm, so after I left there I rented for three years, I believe. The federal government came up with a plan to buy so many families a home and put them on it and help them get a start. They let me get out and find a place to my liking. I went out and bought 320 acres of land for \$2,500.

M: Was that here?

S: Yes. That was right across the branch from here. We had four children when we moved over there. We stayed over there thirteen years and that's where the other two came.

JS: Yes. We had two and raised two over here on this farm.

M: When you say the branch--is there a name for this road?

S: This is known as Dry Creek Road. We stayed over there on that place. The first three years I was there it rained us out all three years, started just as we got a crop in. It rained us out. I got a big part of it planted, and it drowned everything. The water got five feet deep all over my good bottomland over there. It stayed there and nearly ruined everything. Well, I fooled around that year. I had been raising cotton and corn and truck stuff. I didn't make one bushel of corn or one sack of cotton, but I made lots of truck stuff. I sold butter beans for three cents a pound, by the tons. We got them by the tons not just a few. I sold milk, it figured at six cents a gallon. A ten-gallon can of milk would bring us sixty cents. But, we stayed on there and got caught up with the loss.

Every once in awhile, the government official would come out and look over the territory and all. My superintendent over here in town came

out with the forms. One day he came and looked over where I was plowing in the field. He just stood and looked at how everything was drowned, ruined, and shook his head. I guess that was the first year I was out there. He says, "Mr. Sanders, how do you think you're going to make your payment this fall?" I said, "I won't make it." He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, you see what I got. I have nothing to make it with. I got a bunch of real pretty little heifers I'm going to sell after awhile to pay off my debt, but that's as good as I can do. I can't get nothing for them." I couldn't get ten dollars a head. I had ten beautiful Jersey heifers. I says, "I can't get over ten dollars apiece for them. I'll have to sell them and pay off my debts." He said, "Nope. You won't have to sell them. I'll tell you. We're not going to push you. We're going to give you a chance."

Well, they certainly did give me a chance. They stayed right with me. At the end of five years, we had worked hard enough, me and my wife and my children that was old enough to help me, we had caught up the slack. At the end of five years, we caught up, paid up everything and got a dollar ahead. So, we stayed and began to do a little better. We raised good crops over there. I got along fine with the government people, never had the first argument with a one of them. Everybody got along just so smooth and nice.

M: Did you know quite a few people from the Vinton area?

S: Well, we knew several families, but there was just a few in here, and most of them were poor renters. In other words, a lot of them wasn't in as good a shape as I was in. The federal government is responsible for picking me up. I couldn't have lived if it hadn't been for that, and never could have got a place. When I came out here and signed up with them, they asked me if I could make a down payment on the place. I told them just exactly what I had. I said, "I got three or four hundred dollars in the bank, and I'll pay all that down on it and risk it." Well, it wound up that they said, "We're not going to ask you for anything. Just work hard and do the best you can, and we're going to stay right with you." And they stayed with me. I pulled on, on, on. We had some pretty tough times, but we stayed with it. My daddy used to say, "When you lose a thing, don't go away somewhere else to find it. Hunt where you lost it." And so I remember all those things. One thing that he always taught me was to be honest and tell the truth. He said, "Sin has many tools but a lie is a handle that will fit them all."

We came out here in 1939, I believe, on this place the government bought. They built me a new home. I cut timber on the place and built me a barn and all the outbuildings. We put up nice new fences. They furnished the fencing money, too. The place belonged to the Federal Land Bank. It was known as the old Schrock place. A fellow by the name of Schrock had owned it years before then. He had a pretty little farm there at one time. He had a gristmill and a little grocery store back there, and we carried that along. That helped us out.

We sold chickens. You never did see or buy a dressed chicken then. You'd catch the chickens at home, put them in a coop, and carry them to town. I sold frying-size chickens all over town, but I sold live chickens and they'd dress them themselves. You see what it was, you didn't see any cold storage. They didn't know what cold storage was.

When I moved here the streets of West Point were so full of holes you couldn't go down the street, hardly, in high gear in a model-T Ford. It was hard because it had been rocked; there wasn't a paved street there.

My wife got in bad health. The doctor told us that if I couldn't find something else to do, I'd better get away from the farm, because she was doing too much. She had a little heart ailment. After talking to him, I went back and talked to the FHA¹ board, and they agreed to let me off my contract. I was signed up on a forty-year contract, unless I could pay it up before then. They agreed to let me out. Then a person came along who wanted to buy my little farm. I sold it to him, and we left here. That was 1952.

M: You left your store and everything?

S: Yes, we sold all that out. I sold him the farm. Of course, I raised a good many horses and mules over there. We sold our cattle, and horses, and mules and everything I had. I paid every debt I owed anybody and came out with a nice little car and fifteen thousand dollars. We thought we was on top of the world. I tell you, at that time a person who had fifteen thousand dollars in the bank was in pretty good shape. Fifteen thousand isn't anything now, but fifteen thousand dollars was a lot of money then. And there was so many people--well, a heap of them just didn't try hard enough. A heap of them were like they are now, just sit down and suck their thumb.

We moved from here to the state of Iowa. We had some friends up there, and we just went up there taking a little trip. We had never been away from home. We decided we'd sponge a little and take us a little honeymoon trip. So we went, and while I was there I was just like a fish out of water. I didn't know what to do. I had been so busy so long that when I got out there with nothing to do, I didn't know how to handle it. After I was off a week, I decided to get a job. We rented a little apartment, and with what few clothes we carried I went to work for a month. We came back home to finish up the deal down here. I had sold the place, but the man had just made a payment on it. We came back down here and got everything straight. We moved up there and stayed three years--moved back here in 1955. So when we came back, I bought this little old place here, right in the neighborhood.

M: This place is on the Old Vinton Road at the corner of the Dry Creek Road?

¹Farmers' Home Administration

S: Yes, that's right. We've been right here ever since then. We've done very well. I didn't go up there and buy everything I wanted. I watched that fifteen thousand dollars. I bought me a home up there, an old sort of run-down, throwed-away home. When we left there, it wasn't run-down and throwed-away because we built it up, spent some money on it. When I left there, I was renting out two apartments of that house. I bought a twelve-room house. We were using one apartment and renting out two. So we got a little money out of that, and I was working at the packing plant.

Every Monday morning, I made it a point to go to the bank. If I didn't put ten dollars in that bank, I meant to put something there, and I did.

When I came back. . . . My FHA foreman had told me before I left, "In a few years you'll want to come back to farming. You won't have nothing because you'll spend it all; you'll have nothing. You're too old to get a job." Well, I showed him I wasn't a fool enough not to save a dollar. So when I come back he was the first man who walked up to me. He says, "Have you bought a place?" I says, "I found a place and I want it." He says, "Have you bought it, or are you buying it?" I says, "I've bought it." He says, "Did you have enough money to pay for that little old place?"

There's only ninety acres here, but it's right in a nice location, you know, and the school bus running right by here. . . . In the meantime I run the school bus. I said, "You're the man who told me that in a few years I'd wish to be back on the farm, and I wouldn't have a farm nor a dollar or nothing else." I say, "Now, I'm back." He says, "You got your place paid for?" I says, "All paid for." He said, "I'll tell you what I want to do." He took out his checkbook. I said, "What?" He said, "You're one of the best clients we've ever had. I want to build you a brand new house and let you select the plan. And I want to build you a grade-A dairy. I want to buy you fifteen to twenty good cows and let you select the cows."

I stood there a minute and I says, "That don't suit me." He said, "Well, what does suit you?" I says, "It suits me for you to let me alone and let me stay out of debt." He says, "Well, don't you want to borrow no money?" I said, "I don't want to borrow no money." He said, "Well, I'll put it this way. If you ever decided you want to get back on the land bank program, I'll come out there and put you up in business." I said, "Okay, I'll let you know." He says, "All right. Now, by the way, this morning I was at the sale barn, the West Point Livestock Barn. I saw you buy eight hundred or a thousand dollars worth of cattle." I says, "I know it." He said, "Did you have the money to pay for all of them?" I said, "If I hadn't, I wouldn't have bought them. I'm going to stay out of debt. I don't want to get in debt." And I said, "If I want to get in debt, I'd rather borrow from the federal government than anybody I know." You see, when I bought that place over there, I borrowed for three percent interest.

I said, "I got along good with the whole place." He said, "I know you did. That's the reason I offered to let you back on. The land bank people told me to let you back on. I've consulted with them about it, and they said to let you back on, if you want to get back on." I said, "Well, I appreciate every good thing that's been done for me, every bit of it." He said, "Well, let me ask this question. Would you say that the federal government had helped you?" I said, "If it hadn't been for the federal government, I would have never had a home, I don't think. I don't know how I'd have done it. I couldn't ever have bought that place over there and got ahead because it was taking everything as it comes to live on." Well, he wrote all that down and appreciated all that.

I told him, "Now, I got a pretty good little bunch of cows, yearlings, I've bought here. I got the money to buy feed to feed them all, what I hadn't got myself." I bought myself a tractor and a pretty good little farm. Then I got to raising some hogs, raising me a little corn, and I kept strict books on everything that I did. The first year that I was back here I cleared more money than I did up there in that packinghouse. I kept books, and counted every nickle I spent and every nickle I made.

We got a little ahead. I told this man that I was talking to, the FHA man, "See, my motto now at my age is to stay out of debt, as near as I can. But, if I need a little money, get in a tight situation and need a little money, I'll just borrow a little locally. I won't go into big deals about it."

And I did. I borrowed from the folks at the bank that was here in West Point at that time. And, I can go right back to either the Bank of Mississippi or the First National Bank right today and get anything I ask for. I appreciate that. People that I knew and I traded with before I went off came to see me after I got back. Now, you see heaps of times people who leave home can't go back and retrace their steps. They have to get away and go someplace else. I come right back.

This man that I bought this little piece of land from, I wrote to him one day while I was up there yet. I said, "Mr. Nelson, I got my mind made up on a little piece of ground that you own." He owned all this land around here. This old land here sold at one time for three dollars an acre. He owned between five and six hundred acres. I wrote to him and asked him if he would sell the little corner of the road, that "little ninety acres" he called it. I said, "Would you sell that place reasonable, or would you sell it at all?" I caught him the day he needed a little money.

He wrote back and said, "I would sell that little place for \$2,500." I showed the letter to one of my boys that was up there, too. I says, "Earl, I wrote to Gene Nelson about that old place down there at Vinton, and he said he'd take \$2,500 for it, that the neighborhood wanted me back. He said that every neighbor in the country wanted me back." I don't know what he thought. He might of thought I had to borrow the

money, but I had the money. I went to see Earl. That was on a Friday. He had answered right straight back. Earl says, "We'll both be off tomorrow. Let's get up soon in the morning, be ready, and take off down there to meet up with him." He says, "Somebody will grab it. We better get down there and not write him nothing because he can get more money than that." He says, "I'll tell you why. I'll give a thousand dollars profit on your trade, if you don't want it."

So we didn't wait until the next morning. We got off work at midnight, and we headed for Mississippi. We came on down here. I met with him, got a hold of him the next morning, got him over there, and got that put in writing. I paid him \$2,500 on the place. I mean, I paid him \$1,500 on the place to hold the deal. So we got together. I just paid him for his place, and we come over here and got to work on these old buildings.

We was determined we wasn't going to go in debt for a new house. We was going to fix this one up and see how it'd come out later. I still had a little money; I didn't spend it all. In fact, we had enough to build us a new house ourselves but that's when I put my nose to the grind rock. We started working on the old house here. The floors had been broken in with fertilizer, and feed. Back then there was a big old sheep shed right out on the edge of the yard, which was very undesirable. Ticks, fleas, and flies like to eat us the first two or three years. We went ahead and worked the old house over. We decided that as good a house as it was, it was comfortable. It wasn't good looking, but it was comfortable and it still is. It would be foolish to build a new house and tear this one down. So we stayed on here and our last child finished school and left. There's just the two of us and we got all the room we need. We got three bedrooms, a bathroom, and a living room, and it's comfortable. It's very, very common living but it's comfortable. We have plenty to eat and just anything we want. The children, most of them, are right around us. One of our daughters, our baby girl, married a young man who had started work with the Weyerhaeuser timber people. He has gone on up, up, up, until he's a big foreman in the company. They live in Washington, North Carolina. The rest of the children is around about, close around us here. We enjoy them very much. We still enjoy staying out on the farm. I wouldn't live in town if you was to give me a home there.

- M: I would imagine that you told your children all about the history of this place.
- S: Yes.
- M: Do you have any stories about people who were here when there was a town at Vinton?
- S: There's a few of the older people we knew out here who have died. There's the Schrock people that we bought from over there. In their time, Vinton was a little town. The Schrock people lived there, and then the old Bradford was home over here. A fellow by the name of

Bradford owned that place, I've been told.

M: Where was that place?

S: West side.

M: On the west boundary of your land?

S: Yes. Weyerhaeuser owns that now. And Weyerhaeuser owns all of this over here.

M: That's the land on the east side of your farm?

S: Yes. The remains of several of these old houses are round about. One up on the north end here. And as I told you the other day, there was this old schoolhouse over here. I was talking to one of my boys about this place. This was just the outskirts of Vinton, but this was Vinton, I think they said, and that place down there on the Tombigbee River, I believe that was called Barton. The boats used to come up the river to Barton, and everybody would meet the boat. They'd have lots of groceries on this ship, I've been told, and they'd meet the boats.

JS: My grandmother and them would meet it, you know.

S: Yes. That's right. Later on, a town was built over yonder, and they named it West Point. At that time, there was a ferry across down there, I think. One of my boys said that then they came on up a little above where the old ferry was, and that's where they loaded the cotton.

There was a lot of great big old houses up and down the river there. I did know a good many. . . . there was an old man who had a grocery store close to the river while I ran the ferry down there. He lived in the house and had a nice little grocery store on one edge of it. Somebody robbed him there one night, killed the old man and his wife both, and burned the house down on them.

M: That was at Barton?

S: Right down here close to Barton, just above it. Mr. and Mrs. Phillips was their name. Their bodies was pulled out of there.

M: Was that back in the 1950s?

S: Yes. That must have been in the late 1950s. I was down on that ferry three or four years and that was along towards the last. The theory was put--you want me to describe the ferry?

M: Yes. Will you?

S: The old ferry. It was just a common old steel hull, planked on top. Then they had an old Chevrolet car on there. They took the wheels off, and they put a paddle wheel on the side of it to pull it across.

You could put it in reverse and go across. And then forward and come back across to this side. There was a great big cable fastened way up on a high bank on the west bank side and one on the other side. That is what you followed across. You had a roller fastened to a chain to guide the ferry along that cable. Well, there was two, I believe, one on front and one behind. When anybody come on, I'd tie it up to some great big cedar posts to station it for them to come on. They'd come down on there. I could carry two cars or two pickup trucks or one big truck, but didn't carry anything like a big load of logs or lumber or anything like that across. I'd get up on it and go sit down in the Chevrolet. Oh, it was so comfortable and nice. That was up-town then. They had a Negro that had worked there before I did. He pulled it across by hand. That was a big job.

M: There was just a rope attached to the ferry and he stood on the bank and pulled it, or was it done with pulleys?

S: No, it was run through these same pulleys. He had a good heavy stick, about three feet long, with a notch cut in it. It was just big like that. (hand motion) He had a little sack on the cable and he'd reach over and catch that down in that notch, and he'd pull it across that way. That's the way he'd get it across there, unless the water was low enough when he could pull it across easy with his hands.

M: What was his name?

S: I don't know. He's dead. I forgot what that Negro's name was. There is a Mrs. Ellis who lives over there in town. Before I ran the ferry, her husband Andy Ellis owned it. Later he sold it to the county. That is when I got to working on it.

I stayed there through some rough weather and bad times. When it would freeze up too high, we'd have to close it. When the water would get too high, we'd have to close it. Now, there was two of us that run that ferry. I run it one shift and Mr. Ed Wilson would run it the other. He'd go on early in the morning and run it until noon, and I'd go down and take over and run it until seven or eight o'clock at night. Whatever we collected on holidays and Sundays we had a right to put in our pockets. They gave us that. They hired us for the week but they gave us all that kind of time. If I wanted to go down and put anybody across at night, they don't object to that. That fare was mine. There was an air base going on over there at that time. We had lots of the air-base traffic.

JS: It's near the Uithoven's; the old Uithoven house is still there across the river from the air base. That house was there during the Civil War.

S: Yes, that was an old house.

M: You're talking about the house that is called Cedar Oaks?

S: Called what?

M: Cedar Oaks.

JS: Cedar Oaks? It may be.

M: It's down at Barton and it's still standing.

JS: It's on the left-hand side?

S: I don't know. I don't recognize the name Cedar Oaks.

M: No? Could you give me a description of where it is, Mrs. Sanders?

JS: It's right close to the ferry.

S: It's on the left as you go down towards the ferry. When you get on top of the hill, notice and there'll be a gate open to your left, on the north side of the road. And that road leads to the house. That gate may be locked, I don't know. But anyway, that road carries you right in. It's only a little step off the road, if you want to go in there. They might give you a little information on it, but I don't know.

I started to tell you about that old ferry. During World War II when the water got so high, that thing began to come up. We didn't fool with it then. I've been down there and went out on that when we'd have to go from the foot of the hill on the west side there. Had to leave our car west of the ferry and get a boat to go to where the ferry was tied up. There was a great big sycamore tree sitting up on the bank right by the side where we come out on the ferry--we've been down there and get out on that ferry, dipping water out of it to keep from sinking when that thing was up in the top of that sycamore tree, beating the limbs up in the top of that tree.

Running the ferry was interesting but I wasn't doing it for just the interest in it. I was getting a hundred dollars a month then. I was carrying my little farm along, too.

M: What fare did you charge?

S: Twenty-five cents unless I closed up and was fixing to leave, then I'd charge fifty cents. On Sunday afternoon there'd be a lot of sight-seers wanting to go across, back and forth, and I'd get twenty-five cents for a car, fifty cents for a truck. I didn't charge walkers, and so forth, anything. They could just ride across as I'd go. They had a big time down there boating, and I'd be watching them. They'd have their picnics down there. It was a very nice job. Sometimes it could get pretty inconvenient. The weather would be bad, but you had to get out there. I had plenty of rain things on. I'd just get right out there and didn't back out. I never was much of a quitter. I wanted to do my job and do it right.

M: A little earlier you mentioned a school on the other side of the road from your house. Could you describe that school to me?

S: Well, yes. It is easy to describe. It was just a little one-teacher school, just one little room, with the old-fashioned desk in there. It was running one year before I come out here, but it never did run after that.

M: Was that before 1921?

S: No, that was later, sometime in the 1930s; they had just pulled out of here and consolidated with West Point. No, they still run that little school. You know, Ma, Rex went to school over here.

JS: Ann did, too.

S: Yes. That was somewhere in the 1930s. They pulled up and consolidated with West Point and just left the little schoolhouse. It just sat there. They just had the election there; whenever election year came along, they'd have an election over there. If they had any little get-togethers, they could go over there and use it. After I moved out here, the supervisors come and told us they'd furnish everything we needed to repair the old building with, if we wanted to fix it up for a little community church building. So we got over there and fixed it up, worked over everything, and fixed us some nice seats in there. We had Sunday school over there every Sunday. Maybe two Sundays a month we'd have a preacher to come over and talk for us. We'd have things there for the children, Christmas and all that.

M: Where was the school before this one was built?

S: I don't know. This was the first one that I heard of. Down around the old ferry there was some old beer joints, I reckon. I don't know what they were. Them old folks did their thing out along the river. If you mention that anybody is living on the river, the first thing they talk about is he's making whiskey. They thought that everybody living on the river made whiskey. Lots of them down here did make it, too. It was being made when we came out here. I know it. We broke a lot of people because they were afraid to let us know it. They knew we was opposed to it, and a heap of them quit it on account of us. They still hide a little around. We found an old still or two out there, over yonder close to where we lived.

A man right at my door, right at my very front door, they sent him off. He sort of went off his kazip. They sent him to the asylum. While he was gone, I went over to his place, made a good looking over, and I found his old still over there. The still had been moved, but I found his mash barrels and all of that, you know, and the furnace where he had made his stuff. He never did come back there to live. He came back once, but they sent word to the sheriff to go out and get him. The sheriff came here and asked me if I knew this fellow that used to live in the corner house. I said, "Yes, I know him." He said, "He got away from Whitfield," which was where the bug house was. He said, "He's over there at home, and everyone is afraid to go over there. Would you be afraid to go over there?" I said, "No. I ain't afraid of him." I went over there and the poor fellow was cutting wood. The

sheriff came up there and told him, "You know this man here?" He said, "Yes, that's A. C. Sanders. He was one of my old neighbors when I used to live here." So the sheriff picked him up and carried him back, down yonder.

Now, There's lots of old building places. There's houses fallen down and rotted down and gone. I guess you could not hardly find them. Everything is grown up in timber now.

M: What did the old town of Vinton look like when you came here? Was it open land? Was it wooded?

S: Wooded, mostly. There was a good bit of open land around, but there was lots of woods, too. Later on, there were sawmills down there to cut the timbers. All of this in front of the house was pastureland. This wasn't in timber then. It was all open land. They pastured it and farmed it. When Weyerhaeuser bought it, they put timber all over the place here.

M: Could you see where the old houses were at Vinton when you came?

JS: Well, there were some here when we came, wasn't there, Pa? Back when A. C.'s mother and them lived out here, the Dobsons lived in an old house over here.

S: Yes.

JS: And who else lived in that house? There were three houses over there.

S: Well, when we came, Watson lived in that house over there.

JS: I know. I said when Grandma and them lived out here, before we moved. Mrs. Dobson lived right out there. There was a McCool who lived out there. I don't know, there was a few old folks. There were Rainey's and Richards.

M: These were all old families who were here for a long time?

S: I guess for a long while.

M: Where were the houses at?

S: Well, they was strewed through those hills back yonder and sort of back on the northwest side of the road from where my son lives in this next house. Then there was an old house down below where the old schoolhouse was here. It's been torn down.

M: Who lived in the house by the schoolhouse?

S: Well, when we came the Bookers lived there. The old lady, Mrs. Booker, still lives there. They drifted in here from Kentucky a few years back before that. They weren't here when Vinton was. Her daddy owned all this land. He lost it to the Federal Land Bank. That is where Mr. Douglas, a man that had a business in town, came out here and

bought it. He was the one that bought this land up for three dollars per acre. I don't know how many acres of land he bought here for three dollars per acre. When he got ready to sell it, he sold it to a Memphis man. The Memphis man moved out here and stayed on it two or three years and he decided to move. He sold it to a man named Abbott. He sold it to a man named Vernon, didn't he Ma? Abbott sold it to Vernon. Vernon stayed on it a few years, moved off, and sold it to the Comptons, I believe. Who bought this land when Vernon sold it, Ma?

JS: Douglas, didn't he?

S: No, Douglas had it first. Douglas didn't own it then. Mr. Vernon sold it to somebody else. Anyway, he sold the timber off of it and got enough out of timber to pay for the land. Then he sold the land, and moved out. That was about the time I moved. I left here and went to Iowa.

M: You mentioned cutting timber off the land. What kind of trees did they cut?

S: Well, they cut everything, but mostly pine, though. They cut oak and everything, but it was mostly pine.

M: Did they haul it out by land, or did they bring it down to the river and float it out?

S: No, they hauled it out on trucks.

M: Were there any sawmills up here in the local area?

S: Yes, there were little groundhog mills--just small sawmills. There was one about two miles west of here. Then there was one put in down yonder, close to old Barton's Ferry on Mrs. Ellis's place. There was one on our place. One man came over onto our place and cut me what timber I needed, and he bought the rest. There were several little local mills around.

JS: They had quit traveling the river by boat when we were at the ferry.

S: Oh, yes, there hasn't been any traffic on the river since we were around.

JS: Those boats were back in my grandmother's time.

S: There was a time when it was a pretty big thing. It seems like the river filled up a whole lot and they couldn't get up and down the river in boats any longer, so they didn't come back.

M: Has it filled up more in your lifetime?

S: Yes, it's filled up more than it was when we came out here. There's some places now where the water get pretty scant. Well, they can't

get across much in these little motorboats that they ride and play in. If they go fishing down there, they have to watch because they run into sandbars and things in the river.

There was a man that came down once when I was running the ferry. He was a timber man just looking all over the country about timber. He came from "waaaay" up where this river starts. He says, "You wouldn't believe it if I was to tell you where I live you can step over this river, would you?" I says, "No!"

M: The Tombigbee River?

S: The Tombigbee River. He says, "You can step over that thing." He told me where it was, somewhere, I guess, where it branches off from Tennessee, or somewhere up in there. But he says that you can absolutely go down and step across it.

M: I'll bet you've heard some stories about the flooding of the Tombigbee River.

S: Yeah. Why, we've seen it since we've been here. When that water got up in the top of the trees on this side, you know about how flooded it was on the other side, because that's lower on the other side than it is over here. Why, we've seen that water up so high. . . . My sister and her husband lived over on the other side, down somewhere close, not too awful far back from the ferry, and they was up on a high place even with the railroad. Six or seven years ago, when the water got so high over here, the water got right up under the house. They had to carry people out in boats. People would stay in there and keep their cattle and everything in there, until lots of them would drown. Other people would have to come in there and move them out of their houses in boats. If that river were to flood again, they would do the same thing again, stay right back in there. They wouldn't have to move me but once. I'd get out of that place.

Columbus even got flooded. The low districts in Columbus just washed away. Where that shopping center is on this side of Columbus, along Highway 45, where the Sears store is, ooooooh, that water got three feet deep up in those buildings there.

M: What kind of stories did the old-timers tell you about flooding?

S: They mostly talked about the ice being so thick that you could go out across the river. We never have seen it that bad; we've seen it bad enough that the boys could get out and skate on the ice, way out, but I don't think it's ever. . . . Has it ever been completely frozen over, Ma?

JS: I don't think so. Not since we knew it.

S: It got down to fourteen degrees below zero here one time, years ago, I remember. The lowest I've seen is fourteen below, and another time I saw it at seven below. That was cold enough to suit me. It got

near enough frozen over. I wouldn't risk going out on it then. I'd be afraid I'd fall through. But it might have froze over when it was fourteen below zero, I don't remember.

M: What year was that?

S: I believe it was the first year we moved out here, back in about 1939. I stepped off a frozen crack in the ground that wide and thirty feet long. (gestures) I don't know how deep it was, but I know it was so deep there. It was busted open so wide. I killed three hogs the day before that bad cold spell came. The next morning I went to see about my meat I had hanging up. I didn't cut the hogs up; I just killed, dressed them, and left them hanging. When I went out the next morning, that meat was just as stiff as that door is. I had to cut it with an axe; I couldn't cut it with a knife, had to cut it with an axe. All the Negroes around were so hungry for meat and stuff. I sold them everything we could get. I had sweet potatoes and turnips banked. Had a big bag of turnips covered over with hay and dirt, you know. When that all passed away, I had sold all my sweet potatoes, all my turnips, and every bit of the meat that I would let go. My meat froze; I couldn't salt it down. It stayed frozen so long that I had to cut it up with an axe.

M: It was bad times, huh?

S: Yeah. I've seen some bad times in my life. Sure have seen some hard times. Seen some good times, too. We enjoyed it--we didn't know any difference then. It would hurt us worse now than it did then. I've seen times here when we've had our water pipes all froze up, but we've sort of learned how to get by. You know, we'd cover them up good and deep.

M: You mentioned that the black people here were hungry then. Were they farming in this general area, too?

S: They weren't hungry; they just couldn't get to town to get something to eat. That was the reason they were hungry. They didn't have cars, you know, but I could go to town. I had that little old store. I could go to town in the morning and get a load of meal, flour, sugar, coffee and, you know, things you need everyday. I would come home, and chances are I'd have enough people down there when I got back to take everything I bought, just take it right out of the car. They were ready for me, sitting there with sacks. They'd take up everything I had.

JS: There's one more thing I want you to tell him. I know all the Northern people think that we always treated the Negroes bad. Tell them how we treated them when they was sick and disabled.

S: We never did mistreat them just because of color. We didn't never stand back on that because we have had and still have a few that's good neighbors right now. But back there, if there was one sick or in distress, or if they got hungry, we'd divide anything we had with them. We've been to the houses of old Negroes at night and carried

something to them to eat and give it to them. We would give them vegetables right out of our garden, we would cook it and carry it to them. We'd just do anything to help them out. If there was a sick or old Negro in the neighborhood, we looked after them just like we did white people. Some of the best neighbors we had out here was some good old Negroes. Some of them still live around here now.

JS: And them good ones are scared to death to speak to you, nearly.

M: Mr. Sanders, you were telling me that when you were young you had missed some school.

S: I'd have to drop out to work. My daddy was just a poor farmer. He wasn't able to hire all of his labor. We boys had to jump in and help him. I'd get a pair of mules. At fourteen years old, I was swinging a pair of mules with a plow just as a grown man could. I'd have to drop out of school all along to help him with the crop when he'd get real busy, putting our sugarcane in during the early spring, gathering it in the fall, and so forth.

But, I had some help. There were two or three ladies in the neighborhood who had been schoolteachers, and they would coach me. They gave me a little help all along, and I kept my lessons up that way. At the end of school, I would go and take the examination with the rest of the children. Most of the time, I would beat the rest of them. I was talking to a girl down there. She said, "You come to school and beat me on the examination after staying out of school and working." When I did get schooling, I worked hard to get it.

We had to work hard, had to wade through mud and water to make it and the weather was cold and rough, but we realized that we just had to do it. When I would miss a year while I worked on the farm, I would generally have it sort of pulled up. But I finished the ninth grade. That was as far as I ever went. But such things as I could possibly keep up, I kept that up, and that is still with me. I haven't forgot that. I forget things that happened recently, but things way back there I don't. When me and my wife married, I can remember every bit of that, too. We married December 21, 1922. I was working on the railroad. I had got up in the world a little bit better. I was making pretty good wages; I was making forty cents an hour then. Boy that was money! Three dollars and twenty cents a day. (laughter)

M: You were working on the railroad?

S: Yes.

M: Where?

S: In Columbus. I was doing repair for the railroad in Columbus.

M: What did that involve? Did you have to fix the undergear?

S: Oh, yes. Had to look after all the brake shoes and the journal boxes

where the bearings were working, you know. If that needed packing, we had to pack all of that. And had to check the whole thing over to see if there was anything missing that had to be taken care of before the train could get out on the road with a load.

M: Railroads were a pretty big business around here, weren't they?

S: Yes, they used to be. I didn't stay on that job too long. I got back out to where I was always used to, on a farm--picking cotton, pulling corn, digging potatoes, and all that kind of doing. We used to raise our own meat, every bit of the meat and lard and everything we needed for the whole year.

I kept some coon hunting dogs all the time. One night me and another old man went hunting and the dogs caught a great big old black skunk. And they fooled around there and killed that skunk. I decided I'd take him home. His hide was worth about a dollar. I hated to get that terrible odor on me, but I took him by the tail and carried him home. It was "coooold" weather. Just before I got home, I stopped and laid him up on a post somewhere, so no one would know anything about it until the next morning. I went on in. It was so cold I was nearly froze to death.

My wife had gone to her mother's place which was right close to where we lived. She was up there and it was about eleven o'clock at night. She had gone to bed, and the bed was nice and warm. We had a big old featherbed about that thick. I eased my clothes off and put them outside on the front porch. I thought that if I left my clothes out there I wouldn't smell bad. I put on some old clothes and crawled into bed with her. She was in there so nice and warm. She had her head all covered up. I got into bed with her. (laughter) She laid there a few minutes. She threw the covers back off her head and said, "Oh, A. C.! What have you been into?" I played like I was asleep. I said, "Huh?" She said, "Huh, nothing! What have you been into?" I said, "Nothing." She said, "You have too! You've had ahold of a skunk." Her daddy was in bed and he said, "Baby, get up. I wouldn't stay in the bed with that stinking thing. I smell it plumb in here." (laughter) She got up, left me and got into another bed, and I just stayed in there by myself. Oooh-hoooh-hoo! (laughter) Boy, I'll tell you, I was a sight!

I used to be pretty bad to ride young mules and horses. I'd ride twenty miles to get to ride a young horse that they said couldn't be rode. I was pretty rough. You know, I was big and stout as a mule, but I wasn't clumsy. I was active. Man, I could get on a mule or a horse, and he just had to be a good one if he got me off of there. Not many ever done it.

M: Did you ever meet your match?

S: A horse you mean? No, I never did meet one that could do nothing with me. There was some that could have, but I never did meet up with them. I was pretty lucky; I generally stayed there when I went there. I got

thrown a time or two, but I'd get right back up there again. Now, if he'd have bluffed me, that would have been it. But they didn't ever bluff me. I stayed with them. I generally had a good saddle, and I stayed with them.

I traded for a young horse once, the prettiest thing you ever laid two eyes on. They told me when I got him, "Now, that's a mean horse." He wasn't a big horse, either. He weighed about eight hundred and fifty pounds. But he was just as slick as any mole you ever saw. He didn't have any mane to hold onto. And I hopped onto him without a saddle. I got him home. They told me, "You'd better watch him when you go riding. He'll throw you, sure as the world." I said, "Well, this is a good time to try him." I took him home. I got my bridle and put it on him; I did not have my saddle convenient. I hopped up on him and that scamp got up on his hind feet, and I couldn't stay on him for nothing! He'd stand up and walk just as straight as a man, nearly. I'd slip off, but when he hit the ground, I'd get right back on him. I went back to the house and got that old saddle and put it on him. Buddy, I put something on him to hold his old head down so he couldn't rear so straight up. I got me a spur, and I went to work on that rascal and I rode him. I took him out to the end and brought him back. He had never been broke. I brought him back.

I had a one-horse wagon. I said, "Well, it's a good time to break him," I finished breaking him the same day. I put him on that one-horse wagon, and got in there, and started up the road. Buddy listen, that horse took off with that one-horse wagon. That was a brand new one-horse wagon. Boy, that horse carried me up the road about a mile or a mile and a half. I just let him go, just as fast as he wanted to go. When we got up there, I pulled him out on a sage grass hill and made a circle, come back, and went right back to the house. When I got back, he was broke; never had anymore trouble. I sure did enjoy riding horses and mules and yearlings, anything. If a person would tell me there was something I couldn't ride, I'd want to see it then. I was going to try it, sure was going to try it.

We married. . . . I met her. . . . Well, I hadn't known her a month.

M: That's your wife?

S: Yes. She came from Steens, Mississippi to Columbus to work. I was working at the railroad, and she came down there on Monday to work a week before Christmas. She started to work on Monday morning. Monday night, of course, I knew she was there. I went to see her Monday night, walked her home from the job. After we got back to where she was boarding, I didn't leave there until I got things all arranged. That was on Tuesday night, and we married Thursday night.

Sunday night was Christmas Eve. Well, I hired a car and took her back out to her people's to spend Christmas. I was going to leave her out there. I had to work Christmas day and everyday. I took her out there Christmas Eve night. We ate supper out there, me and the boy who carried us out, but before we got to the house, she wanted

me to put her off about a mile from the house, way down on a little dirt road down there. She said, "My daddy'll out cuss a sailor. He's hot-tempered." She had slipped off, you see. I had married her unknownst to them, but I had got her to write them a letter. The next morning I had put it in the mail so they would know about it. So she wanted me to put her off way down there. I said, "I'm not going to do it. Now, I've got you and I'm going to try my best to keep you. I ain't scared." She said, "He'll cuss you out." I said, "It won't hurt me a bit worse tonight than it will a week or two from now. I can't just keep on letting it go. I ain't going to let him think I'm a coward. If he cusses me, he can just cuss. If he can whip me, he'll have to whip me. I ain't going to be no coward." So I just went and toughened it out. But they were just so sweet and nice to me, and they was until they both died. Her mama and daddy both, they were just as sweet to me as my own mammy and daddy could have been. I loved them to death. We got along just fine.

M: Well, sir, you've been awfully kind to us, and I thank you on behalf of the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project and myself. I'm sure that the story you've told will be listened to by a lot of people and that the information you have given us on the townsites will be beneficial to our studies.

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 101
Interviews with
George Howard

conducted and edited by
James M. McClurken



George Howard was born in the Vinton community in 1905. The Howard family moved to the Vinton area before the Civil War and were planters there. George Howard is the third generation of his family to have lived in the area. Much of the information for the time pre-dating Mr. Howard's life was told to him by his father Van Howard, Sr., who served the community in many capacities, including clerking at the Vinton general store and serving as justice of the peace. George Howard's interviews reflect the close ties that the Howards have had with the Vinton community and its people.

Interviews were conducted with Mr. Howard on December 11, 1979, March 26, 1980, and on June 6, 1980. Mr. Howard and James McClurken were the only persons present at the session.

M: This is an interview with George Howard for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. The interview is taking place at Mr. Howard's home on December 11, 1979. His address is P.O. Box 193, West Point, Mississippi 39773 and his telephone number is 494-4850.

Mr. Howard, would you tell me a little bit about your life history?

H: I was born in 1905 and raised in the northeast part of Clay County. At present I am entering my seventy-fifth birthyear. I have spent all of my life in different sections of the area and stayed there until I got older and sought new fields by going to the vocational agricultural school which is located at Pheba. It was a very good school at the time. Then I went back to that community through the summer to farm and to work in the sawmills.

M: So you began your life in the northern part of Clay County on the Tombigbee River?

H: Northeastern.

M: Would you tell me more specifically where your home was?

H: My home was about three-quarters of a mile west of the Aberdeen and Columbus Road. Our eighty acres was adjoining the Monroe County line. When I was very young, there still remained a fence between Clay County and Monroe County. What amused me was the kind of wire that they used. It was made in Birmingham, England, and the wire was flat; the barbs were flat and very sharp. My dad helped build the fence.

The reason they had this fence was because there were so many ticks at the time. They did not want cattle herds mixing. By the time I came along, they had build dipping vats which were necessary to keep the cattle from getting so many ticks.

M: What did they dip them in?

H: They used arsenic and cresote dip in a solution. The vat was about twenty-two feet long and about three and a half or four feet wide. These cattle had to jump into the solution. Of course, that controlled the ticks very well for then. They're controlled much better today than they were then, of course, but that worked very nice. This fence ran along the north side of the homeplace where I was born. It was a four-strand fence and ran the entire length of the northern side of the county. It served a good purpose.

The people who lived in the Vinton community during my earlier days are all gone. They sought greener pastures after they were young. You might say that they looked for a good time. I went to a little school called Vinton School which was about a mile and a quarter from where I lived. I went through the seventh grade. It was a new build-

ing, built after I started to school, to replace the one. At the time I thought the new building was great. It was about thirty feet wide and about forty feet long or twenty-six feet wide and thirty-some feet long.

M: Is that the school that was on Vinton Road and Dry Creek Road?

H: That was the school. At the time, we thought it was one of the largest buildings ever built. (laughter) Lots of students went there. It was a thickly settled community, and all the children attended this school. There were the Dukes, the Wilsons, the Howards, the Kendricks, the Schrocks, and the Bradfords. Their families were large. Some of the Dukes from Monroe County attended that school, some from the Early Duke place.

Dukes had a very nice home in Monroe County. That would be the original home place of old man Bill Duke, but it burned. They had, I believe, five boys and one girl; all were about my dad's age. There was Early, Ab, Carl, Mrs. Gay, and Reeves. Carl had no children. There was also another brother named Rob. He lived on the east side of the Tombigbee River and had five children, I believe. Ab had five children. Lee Alton Duke is one of his sons. The rest of them are dead, except the youngest daughter. She lives in North Carolina. Early had two daughters. The one surviving is Mrs. Olive Maude Bradley. She is quite a property owner in Monroe County. You'll find out that she owns quite a lot of property there. Mrs. Bradley's sister, Irene, attended Vinton School. Carl has no children; he never married. Mrs. Gay married a person who lived in Aberdeen and ran a drugstore for years there.

Dr. George Darracott was very prominent. I was named George after him. He had a tremendous practice covering a five-mile area. He treated lots of people, both black and white. He never failed, regardless, to go to see a person, even when they owed him quite a bit of money.

M: Were there a lot of doctors in the Vinton-Darracott area?

H: He was the doctor, the only one. One other doctor by the name of Richardson came in there during those years, but he got dissatisfied and moved to Pheba. When I went to school there, I knew him very well. He has some children living here in the West Point area.

The Bradleys were another big family who lived between Darracott and Vinton. Ben Bradley and Bob Bradley, who was Mrs. Bradley's father-in-law, were the two most prosperous ones who lived in that area. At the time, Ben Bradley owned a cotton gin, and when I was about fifteen years old, he put in a steam syrup mill. The old gin cleaned about eight or nine bales a day. That's a big day's ginning.

M: That's the gin at Vinton?

H: No, I guess it was on the edge of Monroe County. That was where my dad and all the neighbors did their ginning. This other gin, the Vinton gin, had been dug out of the side of the hill. Mules were used to turn it. I don't know how it worked; I never saw it. Only the old site of the gin was there when I was growing up. But it was

bound to have been a very slow process, from what my dad told me.

M: Mules were used at the Vinton gin?

H: That's right. But the mules were bound to have been very slow.

M: Did your father tell you a lot of stories about the community of Vinton?

H: Well, he was quite a young man, I guess. He never told me much. If he did, it didn't stay with me. He worked out at what's known as Vinton. That's where the old post office and commissary or store were. He worked in the post office for this fellow who was named Trotter or Watson, I think. There was some family connection between the Watsons and the Trotters, I think. I know that Trotter was one of the first people to own that store and post office. Then Watson came into possession of it. My dad worked in the post office and in the store, too.

M: How big was that store?

H: We thought it was a tremendous store. It was thirty or thirty-five feet wide and probably sixty feet long. It was a big building for that time.

M: Was the post office inside the store?

H: My dad told me that the post office was in one end of it. Then a gentleman named John L. Poss lived there. I don't know how he made a living, but he fished and was pretty handy. He was a gunsmith. He was always piddling around and used very common language, you know. It was odd for us kids to listen to him talk. There was another person that stayed with him a good bit. I think they were related. His name was Woodward. They would be over on the Tombigbee River fishing and having a time getting through on these channels. The boat would turn around and we'd hear one of them say, "Lookout, Mr. Woodward, the boat is getting away from us." (laughter)

M: What kind of boat did they use?

H: Oh, believe it or not, they had pretty good boats. One of the odd boats that was in the river there belonged to an old black man who had dug it out of a cypress log. They had used a foot adz. He dug it out of a cypress tree and it made a very good boat about fifteen feet long. Of course, it was heavy, but it served the purpose. My dad was the chief boatmaker in the community. He made some really magnificent boats--skiffs we called them.

My father and Ab Duke, his friend, fished and trapped all during the winter. Through the summer when they were farming, they leased some property on what is known as Cogdell¹ place. My dad made crops there, way over the hill, two and a half miles east from where we lived. Of

¹Also spelled Cogsdell. See interview OH 127 of Hattie Cogsdell Box.

course, they had help and would farm twenty-five, thirty, or forty acres. They had a time getting the crops out of the river bottom to carry the cotton to the gin or to get the corn out. They had what they called "fords" in those creeks, so it wasn't too bad. Of course, fifteen hundred or two thousand pounds of cotton on a wagon was pretty rough in those days. They didn't have concrete and blacktop roads like we do now.

M: The horses had to be strong.

H: Yes, and sometimes they had to use four to get out those creeks. But they leveled it off, so it was pretty nice to get up.

M: What creek was that?

H: Cane Creek. There is a big Indian mound that we used to go along when we went to camp on the river. It's still in there, I guess, unless someone has torn it up. I don't know what tribe it was.

Of course, the biggest majority of the buildings at Vinton were gone. The Coltrane² home stood southeast of the old Vinton store and community area there.

M: Was that down close to the Barton ferry?

H: That's right, that's called Barton's Ferry. We thought it was a very nice home at the time. We used to visit there when I was just a kid--four, five, and six. I can still remember that. It was where the old ferry was, but it's down now. Mr. Cogdell who ran the ferry had a real nice house that burned. I guess there were ten or twelve rooms in there--a beautiful home. I've seen some mighty high water, but it never got over where that place was built. I never have seen it get over it.

M: Do you remember hearing stories about other old houses at Barton?

H: Yes. My grandmother really knew about the Barton community down there. I've heard her call some names of people who lived there, like Coltrane, and Atkins, and. . . . They're the only ones I remember. But she visited there quite a bit. I guess with my dad working down at the Vinton general store, she would go down there with him. She had four children, three boys and one girl, and my dad was the only survivor.

M: Was he born at Barton?

H: Born at the old homeplace where I was born.

M: Oh, so just north of Vinton?

H: Just north of Vinton. He leased land from year to year. I guess it

²Also spelled Coltraine.

was fifteen or sixteen hundred acres. There were several buildings for black people and about four pretty nice homes for white people. Generally, black people weren't provided homes as well as the whites. Some of the people who kept what we call sharecroppers provided good places for their blacks to live, but so many of them didn't. The fact of the business is that their blacks were really exploited. I've known blacks who made big crops, twelve or fifteen bales of cotton and wound up with nothing. Of course, there wasn't much to wind up with, not like it is now, you know. After the Civil War, the blacks were left on the hands of the people who had owned the slaves, and they couldn't do anything with them. Today they feel like everybody owes them something, which is the wrong attitude, I think. That's more so in the Delta country than it is here in what we call the "hill country." They were real good to the black people here; they were real good compared to the Delta area of the state. The biggest majority of ex-slave owners in our community looked after the black people.

M: There was a black community in Vinton?

H: Oh, yes, there were lots of blacks on the place that my dad leased.

M: The Cogdell place?

H: No, they leased that, too, but this was the Benton place, B-E-N-T-O-N. That's just north of the Dry Creek Road, where A. C. Sanders lives. That was a mile and a half to a mile and three-quarters west, no more than that, then two miles north, in that large area in there. There must have been eight or nine families that lived on this particular place. My dad looked after those blacks; he fed them and clothed them just like he did us. When the boll weevil came along, they finally went broke. They farmed but they made nothing because the boll weevil destroyed it. But they were looked after, didn't suffer for a thing, a doctor or anything. My dad saw that they had attention.

I said that the people apparently infiltrated this part of the community from Monroe County--the Dukes, the Cogdells, the Wilsons. My family came from the west side of Clay County. The Wilsons were a big family. They took a detour. Moving to Vinton from the southwest, they came from the west of here to the northwest of Clay County and filtered back to that part of the county.

M: From northwestern Mississippi to. . . .

H: From northwestern Monroe and Clay County. My grandmother was raised in Abbott, Mississippi, about fourteen miles west of here. How she got into that community I never knew. I guess I've heard my grandmother tell why and when they moved there, but I don't remember. My family is buried in a cemetery in what is now a wilderness. That is one of the sore spots in my time.

M: Where is the cemetery located?

H: When you go down that hill and cross the Monroe County line, the cemetery is about two hundred yards to the west of the Aberdeen and Columbus Road. My grandparents and uncles are buried there.

M: Are there stone markers?

H: My grandmother, granddad, and all of my family had markers on their graves, and it was kept up good. They had trouble with the neighbors there and were not allowed to tend the cemetery.

The Weyerhaeuser people own the land there now from the road that runs from Early Duke's place in Monroe County west toward Strong. It must be a piece in Clay and Monroe Counties four miles wide east and west by, I guess, six miles north and south, except for the property that Mrs. Bradley owns in Monroe County. She still owns those. Weyerhaeuser bought that land very cheap--thirty-five dollars an acre.

M: When was that?

H: Oh, that was probably while I was chancery clerk and tax assessor of Clay County. They bought a world of land in the western side of the county for thirty-five dollars an acre. Then they set it out. They'd kill the undesirable timber on it, anything they didn't want, and make pine tree farms out of it. There are thousands and thousands of acres of land. Weyerhaeuser also owns worlds of land in Lowndes County, and they are presently building a tremendous hundred-and-thirty-million-dollar plant just south of Columbus. It's going to be a tremendous operation when they get it set up.

M: Can you tell me what the land at Barton and Vinton looked like before Weyerhaeuser bought it?

H: That was the earliest settled part of the community out there. Of course, some of it was kind of worn thin. No one in those days knew how to rotate crops with beans and peas and so forth to enrich the land. But it was some very good sandy-loam land. Closer to the river, it's very hilly, and farther back to the west you get into the flat country or the lime country, some mighty fine land to the west of this community. This Vinton community was in the "Sandyland" which is a sandy-loam land. But the farther west you go, you get into this black land that runs north all the way to Tupelo, I guess.

M: Was the land around Vinton and Barton farmed?

H: It was farmed extensively. A person back then would start farming in February and farm until November. It was slow going with mules, walking plows, and cultivators. They didn't have tractors like we do today. I often wonder how I would have behaved if we had had tractors to do then like we have now.

M: So you've walked behind a horse and plow?

H: Many a day.

M: What kind of things did you grow?

H: Corn, millet, sorghum, and cotton. Cotton was the principal money crop. All they had to make money out of was the cotton. Times looked mighty,

mighty bad after the Civil War. To send a bale of cotton to manufacturing centers in the Northeast, and all those places that were pretty heavily industrialized, was expensive. They would charge twice as much freight on sending a bale of cotton to the North as they did to send it back to the South. They didn't get that law changed until some twelve or fifteen years ago.

M: What law was that?

H: That was a law about shipping anything from the South to the North. It had cost twice as much as it did to send goods from the North to the South. It was changed, as I said, not over fifteen years ago, since Senator John Stennis has been in Washington.

M: Do you remember people bringing cotton to the Tombigbee River when you were a boy?

H: Well, I've heard my grandmother talk about shipping cotton on a steamboat. I never saw them ship cotton on a steamboat, but I've seen steamboats come up the river, principally for what they call staves, hickory to make spokes, hammer handles, and shovel handles. They cut them on the Cogdell place. They had a big mill in there that cut this timber. They'd char these staves and then make kegs from them and store liquor in them for so long for seasoning. There's nothing better than flavoring your liquor with white oak. The longer you kept it the better it was supposed to be. There used to be beautiful white oak timber in the river area out there, just beautiful trees, and they split just like a match stem, you know. They made the best whiskey barrels.

M: Do you remember the loading of the staves onto the steamboats?

H: I remember that because my dad and Mr. Duke had one old horse who could hear a steamboat two or three miles down the river. I never will forget his name; it was Gray. He was a big gray horse. He could be plowing along in the area pretty close to the river, right on the riverbank, and when he heard a boat, it would take all kinds of ropes and everything to tie that horse to keep him from running away. Steamboats would just run crazy! He'd just go wild like a tiger. Other mules paid no attention to the thing.

But I've seen several steamboats. They would have to pick a time of the year when there was eight to ten feet of water in the river, so they could get past the shoals. You couldn't get a boat over them at low water. One of them south of the Buttahatchee River was pretty bad for them to get through. They had to cling to the east side of the river to get by that shoal. That was the worst one.

M: Do you remember where the steamboats stopped?

H: Oh, yes. The steamboats would go to a place that we called a "whirlhole," a large area in the bend of the river where it was washed out deep. I guess that place was fifty or sixty feet deep. They'd go up there if the river was a little low. If they couldn't turn around where they wanted to, they just went up about a mile, turned around, came back down, and landed on the side of the river that they wanted to land on.

M: They'd land at Vinton?

H: Well, now that's at the old Cogdell place. They may have shipped cotton from Vinton. I've heard my dad talk about shipping cotton from the old Barton Ferry. They shipped a good bit of cotton out of Columbus by steamboat. Aberdeen was quite a cotton market, one of the big cotton marketplaces in the area, but it was not as big as the Delta. I've heard my dad talk about shipping cotton out of Aberdeen by steamboat. I always thought that river was mighty small for a steamboat at Aberdeen. Evidently, they had to wait until the river was up a good bit, but they could make it over the shoals.

M: So you don't remember where the steamboat landed at Vinton, but your father told you stories.

H: I remember where it landed. Not at Vinton. It didn't land at Vinton; it landed at Barton's Ferry which is southeast of Vinton. I know they landed there quite a bit, but what they shipped there I don't know. I don't know whether it was lumber or staves or hickory, but I know that they landed there at the old Cogdell place that you heard me talk about. A fellow by the name of Chafin who was married to Mrs. Olive Maude Bradley's Aunt Verna (Pitman) then, ran a big stave mill down on the river. They put the wood on the river so that they could ship it by steamboat. It was really pretty passable or else they would have hauled it out overland, you know.

M: What other kinds of things did your father tell you about?

H: Oh, well, my dad told me so much. He was kind of a woods man. He was a great old man. Everybody who wanted to buy the timber would get him to cruise the timber, to estimate the number of board feet and so on. He cut most of the best timber from Monroe County down to Barton's Ferry. In my later youth, he was wood foreman for a pretty big mill. I started working at the sawmill when I was thirteen years old, and I did everything at this H. G. Hale Lumber Company mill that had to be done. It was a big operation, and Dad estimated the timber that Hale bought in the area. He was in charge of the logs and seeing that everything went off in the woods with the saw hands. He was a filer, too, and kept the saws in shape. He was just a good woodsman and never had any trouble with anybody. Generally, when you have a lot of people around a pretty big mill, you have trouble with the hands. He never had any. That mill used to cut sixty thousand feet a day. It was a pretty good mill.

M: Where was that located?

H: That was located in Monroe County, but I still lived in Clay County. I guess I helped cut most of the timber from the Clay County line to about seven miles north of there, up and down this river, beautiful virgin timber. When they built the Barton Ferry, they wanted timbers twenty-six inches wide and twenty-six feet long, and four inches thick, all of heart pine. Of course, that takes a pretty big log, you know, something like this table. My dad cut the timber to get a piece of lumber 3" x 26" x 26'. They had the trees; they were reserved. This man who owned the lumber company saved all the heart timber that came

through that mill. When I was sawing later on in life, my instructions were that any solid pine, heart pine, was to be saved for himself. He shipped this lumber to Mobile, Alabama, and built a beautiful home there. Every piece of lumber in that home was heart pine with edge-grain flooring. Every piece was beautiful. We had the planing mills there and we planed the lumber to suit him. For finish planing, all you had to do was to change the blades on the planer.

Hale went broke in later years. I was working with him, sawing at the time. He had lots of timber that he could have sold for \$130 or \$140 per thousand board feet. A recession came along in 1920, 1922, or 1923, and he sold that lumber for thirty dollars a thousand. He went broke. I told him what was going to happen, but I was a kid, though, and he didn't think I knew what I was talking about. Evidently, he thought I was guessing. But we cut timber for this ferry, and the trees that we cut were generally in the worst place. So Mr. Hale went to a person in Monroe County, up in the Dahlem community. Some fellow there had four yokes of steers. They were beautiful steers, monstrous things. I guess they weighed twelve to fifteen hundred pounds per steer. And they were all decorated up. There were beautiful brass tips on the horns to keep them from goring each other. Oh, they were classy. They had classy yokes and everything, just fancy. The person that handled those steers was marvelous. He guided them without lines just by talking and cracking a bullwhip. He never hit one, but he could pop that whip in a certain way, at a certain time, and that steer knew just exactly what to do and did it. It was marvelous just to watch him go through the woods with no bridles, lines, or anything at all. They'd just go right down and when they got to this log, they knew exactly what the man wanted them to do. He'd just talk to them and they'd get lined up, take that log, and just go right on off with it. It was beautiful and marvelous to watch it.

We got the logs out and I helped cut the "runners," we called them, for this ferry. They hired my dad to build a ferry, to cross at Barton's Ferry, you know. I didn't get to see it while he worked on it. I was working at the mill then. He built a nice ferry. Of course, he could do most anything. He was a pretty good carpenter, blacksmith, lumberjack, everything.

Some of the houses in the Vinton area have burned. It's sad. Lots of times they were built of the best hard lumber and used shingles made out of hard pine. Of course, they used chimneys. Sometimes the soot caught fire and, of course, your house was gone. That rosin is just like oil. Lots of beautiful homes in that community burned from that cause.

M: Can you remember what any of the homes looked like?

H: Oh, yes, especially the Duke home. It was a colonial-type house with pillars. Bob Bradley's home was north of where Mrs. Bradley's home is now. It was a beautiful home.

H: Can you remember any of the houses down by the post office that your father worked in?

H: Well, the Wilson home there was a beautiful home. The Ellis home was a very nice home, but they remodeled that and ruined the looks of it.

M: Is it still standing?

H: Part of it is still standing. The people that came into the community there decided that they wanted to do something to the house, and of course they changed it all and ruined it, as far as I was concerned.

M: Where does that house stand?

H: It stands on the Barton Ferry Road. There's a black church out there called Lenoir Chapel. It's just before you get to that church, when you cross the Dry Creek. Dry Creek ran down through our place down through the Ellis farm. Zack Ellis was supervisor in that district for a number of years.

The Henry Wilson home was very nice. He had all boys, Dennis, Trannie, Zack, Tobe, and Tom. They had a very nice home right across from the Booker place. That's the next house south from A. C. Sanders and right across the road. In front of Booker's, right across the road, was a real nice house. That was the original Wilson home. He owned quite a bit of property from there, north and south along the riverbank. There was a very nice home where this old commissary or store was. Miss Lucy Natural³ owned that property.

Right across the road from her house and the old commissary or store was a pretty big cemetery known as Taylor Cemetery.⁴ I guess it's still there. One of the interesting things that I can recall from when I was a kid was a man in a metal casket. The vault or sealer was built above the ground out of brick. They didn't know how to make brick that will last a hundred or two hundred years like they do now. One corner of this vault was broken off; the brick had fallen out. The man in the metal casket had glass over his face from the waist up. My dad and I would occasionally go along there and look at him. He naturally was just petrified. It fascinated the fire out of me and worried me, too. During the WPA days, my dad fenced that cemetery and cleaned it up. He really fixed that vault that was above the ground.

M: You say that worried you?

H: Yeah, a kid worried about death. You have a different concept then than you do now, you know. His hair was just parted, all slick. He looked nice. But I would dream about that thing at night.

M: You mentioned Miss Lucy Natural's home.

H: Yes, it was right behind the old store or commissary. It was behind

³ Also spelled Natcher, Natchez, and Nacher.

⁴ Also called Vinton Cemetery.

the commissary about a hundred yards. A very nice house, one of the nicest houses in that community, and it was well kept. She had this son who was an invalid, and she would take him on a buggy ride almost every day. Later, when I was attending Vinton School, she would come along by school with this child. She had a dog, a monstrous Saint Bernard dog, a beautiful dog. He followed right along behind her buggy all the time. It always amused us kids to watch this dog following her buggy. She'd give her son a ride every day. She was very attentive to him.

M: How big was her home?

H: Her home faced west. Of course, it had these piers, you know.

M: Long columns?

H: Yes, columns and a hostelry. That's where the buggy and the horse were kept, near the house for convenience, so they weren't any trouble to get to.

M: So it had a small sort of stable behind the house.

H: That's exactly right.

M: How far behing the house?

H: Very close, about forty yards. It was as good as the house. It was directly behind the house and very convenient. She made a trip every day if the weather wasn't too bad. Of course, she always had one of the classier buggies but not a surrey. She didn't have one; we had one. You don't see many surreys anymore. But, we were always interested in that dog. He just followed every day.

The old Schrock home, about a mile west of the old schoolhouse, was a very nice two-story building. It burned. Just half a mile to the west of that school and on the north side of the road there was a log house, a really nice house called the old Benton home.

M: That's on the Dry Creek Road?

H: That's right. It was two stories. We called it a story and a half, but anyway it had rooms upstairs. The logs were really crafted too; they weren't just thrown up and daubed with mud. They were really fixed nice and fit just like a shoe. We don't have any log houses left around Vinton. I know of only two log houses left in the county that are beautifully crafted so that the logs fit smoothly. I was raised in a big log house that was built by slaves. When the Civil War was over, my grandmother and my grandfather had fourteen slaves. They told them that they had been freed, that they could do what they wanted to. Every one of them stayed with them; most of them died with them.

M: This was the grandparents who lived in Vinton?

H: That's right, in the community there. I guess what we called Vinton was an area about a mile or a mile and a half in diameter.

M: Was Vinton ever a platted community?

H: No, never platted. Just a community.

M: By "community" do you mean there was a central area with houses around it?

H: Central area, that's right. The central area was this old commissary. For a long time they had a post office there.

M: Were there any other business buildings there?

H: No, no other business buildings. I was wondering where they got merchandise from. There wouldn't be but one place they could get it, and that would be from Columbus. Thinking about it, they must have taken it to the river and ferried it across the river. That's the way they carried the cotton to the market, back when they had far to go. They would go get their merchandise and bring it back across on the Barton Ferry. Coming to West Point was difficult at that time. In the wintertime, the grass and this black mud would stick to the wagon wheels. It would get so that you couldn't possibly pull it. It would just lock them, just keep accumulating like a bale of hay. I have seen them use just two wheels to a cart, and they would have to take axes every so often to cut the grass off the wheels. That was in olden days.

M: You mentioned that you were brought up in a log house.

H: Yes, I was raised in a log house.

M: Can you tell me how it was built?

H: Well, it was built by slaves, too. My grandmother and granddad built the house when they moved into that area.

M: How was it laid out?

H: It was a dogtrot house. Each room was 14' x 18'. A dogtrot is when they have one room on each end and a space of about 12 or 14 feet through, an open-ended hall between the two rooms. They called that the "dogtrot." Later on most people who owned the log houses with the dogtrot closed those halls in to make a nice living room or a den, you see. Back then they used the dogtrot because you got ventilation through the house so it was cool. The log is squared off to 10 or 11 inches. It was warm in there, but it was cooler in the summer than the houses are today. There's more insulation to the logs. They were just as smooth as this table. Then between the logs, they would mix clay and hay to caulk between the logs. They'd have a warm house in the winter or a cool house in the summer.

M: What were their fireplaces usually made of?

H: Some of the oldtimers knew how to make the brick. They'd make the brick and bake them in a brick kiln, a dry kiln, to dry them. When they put them down, they used clay and grass between the brick. In

the oldtime cabins, they used lathe chimneys, just strips of wood about three or four inches wide. They mixed up a good thick paste of clay and hay and put the paste in between the lathes, one on top of the other. You would think that it would burn down, but it didn't. The houses that were lost, back early, burned because they were made out of pine, the shingles were made out of pine. Shingles of pine were easy to rive with froes. You take good pine or good oak, either one, and rive the shingles or the pickets for fences, or the tailings, or the boards, or whatever you want to rive out of them. There's kind of an art to that. If a person don't know how to rive a board, he'd get into trouble quick; he'd have pieces all sized and running every way. On top, it comes out; turn it over and bear down and it goes in, into the wood.

The people that owned Waverly Mansion were very wealthy. The lumber in that building was shipped from England. Most all of the woodwork in that building was shipped from England and hauled up the Tombigbee River in a steamboat. My dad was a good friend to those brothers.

Back then they evidently had colder weather than they do now. I've heard my grandmother and my dad talk about the Youngs taking ice out of the Tombigbee River and storing it in their "icehouse," and keeping it all summer. It was below the ground and covered good so they would have ice all summer.

The Youngs had foxhounds. Then they had a cockpit where they fought cocks, you know, rooster fights. That part hasn't been restored. They had a speaking tube down on the back porch. When the maid, the cook, would come to the house in the morning, they'd speak through that tube up to the rooms and, of course, they'd come down and let them in. I asked the fellow, the new owner of the house, "Where is the speaking tube?" He said, "They didn't have any." I said, "Oh, yes, they did. I've been down here when I was a kid, and I know they had it." He said, "I don't know where they had it." I said, "Well, if you go out there and look on that door facing, you'll see the hole where they used it." (laughter) He said, "I didn't know what that was." I said, "Well, that's exactly what it was." Have you ever been inside Waverly Mansion?

M: Yes.

H: It's pretty interesting. My dad used to foxhunt there. When the hunt would come, he would get involved with that and have a big time. I remember that when he'd go down there the two old brothers--I can't think of their names--they had two liquor cabinets, one on each side of the door. The first thing they'd ask you when you went through the door was if you wanted a "dram." If there was any drink, it was a "dram," a dram of liquor, you know. One didn't think about it in drams, he wanted to take a "drink." (laughter)

M: So your father went to Waverly often?

H: Oh, yes, he and those Young boys were good friends. There was another place, called the Rose place, on down to the southwest of Waverly Mansion. They were very wealthy and that was a beautiful place. Old man

Rose--I can't think of his name--he had two sons, Martin and Clifton. They owned a world of property in that area out there. Clifton came to West Point later; Martin stayed out there. He later had a cotton gin out there and had a pretty big store about four miles west of Waverly. I was chancery clerk when Clifton died. He was worth about three million dollars. It just accumulated. He never spent three cents, or whatever it was at the time, for first class mail. He used a penny postcard. I've seen him buy property in Birmingham or some kind of a complex or something on a penny postcard. He was just an absolute fanatic about saving money. I guess that's the way he got filthy rich.

Then he died. The pipes froze under one of his rental houses, and he was under there fixing the pipe. He had a heart attack and died. That's true.

M: When were you chancery clerk?

H: I was elected tax assessor in 1948, after I came back out of the army, and held office for eight years. That would be 1956. I was elected chancery clerk and held that job for twelve years; eight years tax assessor, twelve years chancery clerk.

M: What were your duties as chancery clerk?

H: The chancery clerk's office is a clearinghouse for the business of the county. The chancery clerk is the recorder for the board of supervisors, the clerk for the chancery court, and is the county auditor. In other words, he's the whole cheese; it's just a clearinghouse.

Of course, I was glad I got beat. I didn't intend to be beaten, but there was the upheaval about this time. It was literally the first time the blacks were ever allowed to vote. I had done more for them than anybody in the county, and they turned around and threw me out. (laughter) That's the way they do you.

M: Could you describe the Watson house to me? There would have been a transaction on that when you were a chancery clerk, wouldn't there?

H: The Watson house? There's no Watson building left in that area. Captain Henry's great-grandson owned one across the road from the commissary, to the west of the cemetery I was talking about. He built a plain small home there, but nothing else is left.

M: There was also a house next to the commissary store. Do you remember what that house looked like?

H: That was the Lucy Natural house.

M: I see.

H: Years after, when there was no store or post office in the commissary, old man Poss lived there. He was a gunsmith and he fished and was always doing something. He was a good old man who could do anything, if you could get him to do it. I never did know how he lived. There were a good many nice houses at Vinton, but they went up in smoke

or deteriorated and fell down.

M: Did you ever play in them when you were a child?

H: Oh, yes, many a time. You know, people don't visit their neighbors now like they used to. I've seen times when my mother would have twelve or fifteen for lunch on Sunday. If that many people came to see me now, I'd run out the back door and wouldn't come back. It would scare you to death to have to feed that many, but it was no effort for my mother to prepare food for that many people.

M: Did they come after church on a Sunday?

H: They'd come after church, or sometimes they would just accumulate on Thanksgiving or some other special day.

M: What church did the people go to in Vinton?

H: There was a church in the neighborhood of the Taylor Cemetery called Pilgrim's Rest. It was a Baptist church that was moved from up in Monroe County. I don't know whatever happened to it; I never have been able to find out. I don't ever remember hearing my dad or grandmother tell, but I know that my grandmother used to go there. Then they decided they'd move another church from up in the Darra-cott community and created Bethel. That's where we all went to church when I was a kid. The church was too small for the people in the community. It was a fairly good size for a country church, but it wouldn't take care of half of the people who attended services. It wasn't nearly large enough, especially in the summertime when they'd have what they call "protracted meetings." Then there were acres of people around there.

M: Would they bring out picnic lunches?

H: Oh, yes, there was always one occasion when they would have a lunch on the ground. Back early as I can remember, at one place they had permanent tables built. Later on, when I was a kid seven or eight or nine years old, we had a Sunday school down at Vinton School. The Sunday school had picnics down there every so often. Vinton was just a pretty live community then.

M: Did they hold school there and then hold church there besides?

H: They never had church, never had preaching there, but they had Sunday school in the afternoon. Up at Bethel, they had services twice a month. That was all they could afford then, you know.

M: So they had a circuit preacher?

H: That's right. They could afford preaching two Sundays a month, but on the other days we went to Sunday school down at Vinton School.

M: You mentioned that they had just built the school when you started. Where was the school that you started at?

H: Right on the corner of the road. There wasn't twenty-five or thirty feet between the building and the roads on either side--one going north and the other one going west.

M: So they just tore down the old school and built the new school there.

H: They built everything new. Everything they put in was new--the lumber and everything. But they tore down the old building. A fellow named Dennis Wilson, who lived two or three hundred yards down the road, tore the building down. I think he torn it down for the lumber to build a barn or something like that.

M: Do you remember what that school looked like inside?

H: Oh, we had little one-seat desks that had the arm around in front to study on. They had a good many of those. I don't know how many. They also had two-seaters. There were two students to each desk. You had one ink tray on your side and one ink tray on that side. You kept your books on one side, and the person that was sitting at that desk with you kept his books on the other side. They had two places to keep pencils and all that, too. I don't know how many students were there, but I guess there must have been forty or fifty sometimes--with only one teacher. What could they teach a fellow with that many students?

M: Did it have a blackboard in front?

H: Oh, yes, a blackboard that was long, all the way across one end of the building. They had a stage on that end of the building and a door on one corner. Across the rest of the stage end there was a blackboard. They had an old pump organ. Mrs. Andrews played this organ all the time.

M: That was when Sunday school was there?

H: Yes, Sunday school and for any special program during school. Of course, they always had some sort of special program going on during school.

M: Is the description that you just gave me of the new Vinton School that you went to?

H: Yes. The first year I went to school was in this old school building. I believe it was one year, and the next year they built this new school building.

M: The old building wasn't as fine as the new one?

H: Oh, no, it was about the size of this kitchen and the den together, I guess.

M: Probably thirty feet long?

H: Just about thirty feet long and fifteen or sixteen feet wide.

M: And they didn't have the desks in there?

H: No, they had only a few desks, very few, and the rest sat on home-made benches.

M: So Vinton community became quite affluent when you were a young man.

H: Oh, yes. Absolutely. It was a very live community, very live. My dad was the justice of the peace for twenty-six years. Lots of times Vinton School was used after school hours for a courtroom. I know that lots of times they would have trials in the school. My dad was quite well-informed on the law. It's amusing to me how my dad had accumulated as much knowledge on different things as he did. He was a crackerjack mathematician and could work algebra. I never could understand where he learned all this. When I finished high school, he could do problems that I couldn't start. I'd get into solid and plane geometry or trigonometry, or something, and he could work it, but I never could understand. He was just smarter than I was or something, but he could handle it. He was justice of the peace all those years, and when he moved to West Point he was still justice of the peace for District One. He never had to campaign; they always elected him. Well, he ran one time that I know of. They elected him. Well, he ran one time that I know of. They elected him the rest of the time.

M: What kind of cases do you remember him handling?

H: Oh, civil cases, you know. Prosecuting someone who did something wrong, who had no business doing it. Or blacks fighting, we called them "niggers" then. Some of them are still niggers, but the better ones are the blacks, if you know what I mean.

I made my dad retire. He lost his left arm and got to where he couldn't handle his papers, so I got him to retire.

M: At what age?

H: Eighty-eight.

M: What year?

H: He retired about three years before his death.. He died in 1960, and my mother died in 1961. He had lost his arm while I was in the Army overseas. I think his arm was burned off by radiation. He took two treatments a day; sometimes twice a week on the arm. That's what burned the arm off. I just know that's what happened. My sister was a nurse, and she thought the same thing. Of course, the doctor had told him that's what he needed, but it wasn't. That was wrong.

M: Your family has been in this area for a long time.

H: Well, some member of my family and my kinsmen were in the courthouse for fifty-six years.

M: That was before your father's time?

H: That was from before my father's time all the way up to me. He wasn't a lawyer or judge in the courthouse; we didn't class that. But with my tenure of office as tax assessor and county clerk, we were there for fifty-six years. That was a good long time in one family. Something to be proud of.

M: Yes, sir. Can you think of anything that we haven't covered yet?

H: I'd need time to study it. When you come along next time, I might have something to add.

M: The Project will appreciate all the information you have given, and I appreciate it. Thank you.

H: Well, I enjoyed it.

M: This is an interview with Mr. George Howard for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. The interview is taking place in Mr. Howard's home. His address is P.O. Box 193, West Point, Mississippi 39773. The day is March 26, 1980. Mr. Howard's telephone number is 494-4850.

Mr. Howard, since the last time I was here, I came up with a lot more questions for you. (laughter) In your first tape you talked about Dr. Darracott. I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about medical care.

H: Well, he was a country doctor, and he had a huge practice. There had been other doctors in that community including one Dr. Richardson, who later moved to Pheba. He moved into the the old Bradley house, but he didn't stay there long. I've heard my dad mention another doctor who was in that community, but I don't remember his name. He didn't stay there long, due to the fact that he was a dope addict. Dr. Richardson came in there and he left and went to Pheba. Dr. Darracott was getting out of medical school then. He was a young doctor and was very popular. Everybody loved him. Of course, he had more practice than he could actually take care of, but he went to see everybody who called him. They got phones over the community so they could get to him, you know.

Our home had a phone. Everybody worried to death about calling the doctor. We had to call to Ben Bradley's place for Mrs. Bradley, and she had kind of a relay station, I guess you can call it. She'd call Dr. Darracott for the different people in the community, you know. Of course, the doctor used the buggy during the summer-time and rode horseback during the wintertime, until he got a car in 1912 or 1913. He got one of these cars that didn't have a steering wheel. It had a stick on it. When the weather was good and the roads were fairly good, he drove that over the community so that he could get around a lot faster.

There was another young doctor who was raised up in Monroe County. His name was Guy Bryan, and he married Jim Ed McGraw's sister, Fannie Mae, and they moved to the Delta. I believe they moved to Mennis City, in that locality somewhere. He died there and so did his wife. They had one child. I never knew what became of the daughter. I don't know whether she is still living or if she has had any heirs or not.

M: Was Dr. Richardson related to Billy Richardson?

H: I don't think so; I don't think so. Where he came from, I don't know. I never knew. He married a girl from up in Webster County, a Cooke girl, and they had four children, Chalmis, Elizabeth, Charleston, and Carrey. Chalmis was the youngest, and he died with some disease. I've forgotten what it was. It was not a very known

about disease in those days. That was when I first started going to school at Pheba in 1922.

M: What kind of sicknesses were common out there? What kind of things would you call the doctor for?

H: In the wintertime it was pneumonia, and in the summertime and spring it was malaria. We had a world of malaria in the south, just a world of it. You're looking at a man that it almost killed. I had it so long that I thought I was going to die and was scared I wouldn't. I went years without getting it again. Twelve or fifteen years later, longer than that, I started to working in this drugstore in Starkville, and I knew that I had malaria, again. I went to Dr. Eckford over there. I said, "I got malaria. I want you to give me. . . ." At that time, they had Atabrine and another had just come on the market. He said, "Oh, you haven't got malaria." I said, "I know I have." He said, "How do you know?" I said, "I've had it so much that I know when I've had it." He said, "Oh, go on." So, he took a blood sample, and sent it to Jackson. Not the next day but the day after that, he got a report from Jackson. He called me at the drugstore to come up to his office. I went up there and he said, "You're full of malaria, boy." I said, "I knew it." He said, "Well, I want to give you a treatment." I said, "I've already started on it." He said, "What did you take?" I said, "I'm taking Atabrine, and then I am going to take quinine with it, a treatment of it. I'll take Atabrine five days and then take this quinine." I can't think of it now. I'm getting old; I can't think of it.

M: Did the doctors ever give you quinine?

H: I took quinine for thirty days after I took that treatment. I didn't have it anymore, haven't had it since.

M: How did the people treat malaria before quinine?

H: Quinine is hard for children to take. They gave it in "chocolate quinine," they called it. It was a chocolate syrup with quinine in it. Of course, that quinine stuck to your mouth and it was terrible. That was the only thing that my dad and mother ever used. Now, my family would have malaria, but they'd get rid of it. I was the one who it was a hard case to do anything with it. It just came very near to killing me. Whenever you get malaria hematuria, it is just about to be its last leg. That is where your urine is practically just blood. You're just about dead then. I got in that shape.

M: Can you remember any years out there when it would have been epidemic?

H: Oh, they had malaria every year, every summer, all over the community. That malaria is caused from the mosquito, Anopheles. When I went overseas, they said I had another type of malaria caused by the Aedes aegypti mosquito. The first place that kind would show up on the boys down there would be in the testicles. They would

send them out right away. You'd have to be where this *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is prevalent, and where they bite one to another, you know, and they circulate it. That's how it keeps growing and growing and growing. They said I had it started on my right testicle, but it disappeared. When I got back, there were no more *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos. We don't have them here, but we have *Anopheles* which is the bad one to cause malaria. About sixty-seven percent of the natives in New Guinea where I was had malaria. I don't know how they lived, but their life span was thirty-three years, I believe, thirty-two or thirty-three years.

M: Did the Vinton store carry drugs?

H: I imagine they carried patent drugs. I know they did because I've heard my daddy say that he sold different drugs, you know.

M: Did you recall any of the names?

H: Oh, no, I just don't remember any names that he called. I remember some old-time medicine that my grandmother used to take. It was Swifts Sarsaparilla and Three S Compound, and she took Blue Mass which is a calomil. They had calomil and such as that. They could buy quinine.

M: Did quinine come in a brand name?

H: No, that's just a regular quinine name. There was no brand name to it, or nobody had a patent on it or anything. It was just like selling salt, sugar, or coffee in this country.

M: Did your dad sell those drugs to your grandmother?

H: I imagine so. I never heard him say, but I know they sold them because they had to have those drugs in the summer. Of course, they had home remedies back then, you know. My grandmother made different things. For a cold, she'd use camphor and suet and made a poultice out of it to put on a person's chest. I don't know how good that did. Then another old-time medicine that they used for everything was asafetida, and it stinks like a garlic. They used it for everything.

M: Did they go out and gather this stuff?

H: No, they bought that. It was manufactured and sold at the stores and drugstores, wherever they could get it in those times. The store there at Vinton was that community's place of buying such things as that.

M: Did they bring supplies to the store on steamboats?

H: I had heard my dad talk about that chute going down to load cotton. I also heard him say that they brought commodities up from Mobile to Barton. I know he said that they hauled them by wagon and ox wagon

and such as that up to the store. Of course, they didn't sell as much meal then because people grew their corn and had it ground. Back then I don't remember where they ground this wheat to make flour, but there was a mill in that part of the community, somewhere, that made flour.

M: Do you remember. . . .

H: I don't remember . . . I think it was old man Ben Bradley's family that had this flour mill. I heard my grandmother talk about that.

M: Then your grandmother would have had her meal ground by Ben Bradley, probably?

H: We just lived three quarters of a mile across from his gin and gristmill. Later on, he put in a syrup mill there.

M: What about the cotton gin at Vinton?

H: I don't know of any down there. I've heard my daddy speak of a cotton gin in the Vinton community, but I never knew where it was. I knew where there was one on this old Vinton place which was south of where I was raised--an old-fashioned gin of some kind. I never knew what kind it was, but it was turned and pulled by mules. That old place is still out there. It was up on a high bluff.

M: Could you describe that gin to me?

H: I never saw it, but I've heard my daddy, and he's pointed out to me a many a time where this old gin was. I never knew what kind it was or what kind of machinery it was or anything. I've heard him talk about a screw press. There was some way that those mules would turn that. They had a screw auger, you know, to press the cotton up. It packed the bales pretty tight back in those days.

M: Do you remember hearing about Mr. Hodo?

H: No, I never knew Hodo. You've got that name mentioned on the list there, but I never knew him. Now, on the list, you have the name Uithoven. I knew him and I know a Lenoir. He was a black person. I knew the Shirleys. His son lives out east of town. He used to be supervisor. Montgomery, he was raised. . . . He's up in the Lebanon area, came up there.

M: What was his first name?

H: Lewis. His son lives out on Lone Oak Drive. He married a Thrailkill.

M: Was he a farmer up there?

H: He was a farmer, and he recently came from Starkville. He had a brother who taught shop and mechanics at State College, old A & M then.

M: When would he have come to this part of the town?

H: Well, he married this Thrailkill girl around 1900, or a little after 1900. The way, I think, he met this Thrailkill. . . . Now, she was raised at Darracott community or pretty close to the old Darracott home.

M: What was her name?

H: Sadie. They were Baptist, and I think he attended the association that was held in Bethel. I believe he met her there and later got married. Then later, he moved from the Darracott community and bought this place out on Lone Oak Drive.

M: Would he have been living up by the Shaws?

H: The Shaws lived further north than that.

M: I see.

H: It was in what they call the Darracott community, though.

M: Did you know the Shaws?

H: Yeah, I knew a man, Artie. No, I didn't know him, but. . . . Did you ever see a book called, A Place Called Darracott?

M: Yes.

H: Well, I can't think of the name of the Shaws, now. They were pretty tough.

M: Were they?

H: Yes. Somebody killed Mr. Artie Shaw, just cut his head off. They never did know who did it. That's how he met death.

M: You just stayed away from the Shaws if you could?

H: Well, they were a little farther north than we were. Our ranging ground was up as far as Darracott and to those churches up there. We had two churches there, a Presbyterian church and a Christian church right across the road from one another. The Christian church was on the side where that cemetery is now, and the Presbyterian was on the other side, or visa versa. I've forgotten which way, but the road went right between the two churches.

M: Did you know the Wrights?

H: I didn't know the Wrights. That's somebody else. I don't know whether they came in after I left this part of the country or not.

M: What about the Kellers?

H: Kellers, I knew them. Thomas Keller, I knew him, and Mary Keller, Nancy Keller. David Keller, he's dead. I knew them. Then they had some half-brothers and sisters who were on up. There was a Rhea out here, Nancy Rhea, or Frances Rhea. There was one named Guise Uithoven. Frances Uithoven was married to old Doctor Uithoven. There was Guise Uithoven and another boy. I can't think of his name. I think he lives in Columbus. He worked for Bell Telephone, no, Western Electric, in New York for a long time. His health was bad. I understand that he had T. B., but I kind of doubt that because he lived too long for it to have been T. B. Generally, people who had T. B. then died, you know. They wouldn't have any cure for it, you know. He would have gotten to be a young man, and then it would have been all over with.

M: What about the Whatleys?

H: The Whatleys, I knew them. There were four of them: old man Joe, old man Dick, and Miss Ralph, and Miss Victor.

M: Where did they live?

H: They lived on what we call the Barton/Payne Field Road. Have you got time for me to get a map?

M: Sure.

H: Dick Whatley owned sixty acres, and his brother Joe lived for a number of years in the Delta someplace, in around Clarksdale. He accumulated his fortune, so to speak. He came back when I was a youngster about thirteen or fourteen years old, and bought eighty acres just south of the old homeplace which was where old man Dick, Miss Ralph, and Miss Victor lived.

M: I see. Was that on the Barton Ferry/Payne Field Road?

H: That's right. Then he bought eighty acres across the road, right in front of the old homeplace, just poor, sandy land. He couldn't raise anything on it, but he bought it. He thought he was going to do a whole lot with it and never did anything with it. But, he was a good old man; I thought a lot of him, all of them.

M: Did you know a family named Berry?

H: Berry? Yes, I know them. They came from Monroe County. Mrs. Tom Brooks was a Berry, and these Duke boys' grandmother was a Berry. The other Berry was a Mrs. Wilson, the mother of Buddy Wilson who lives on Lone Oak.

M: What was her name?

H: Her name was Mamie. Then there was another boy named Eddie Berry, and he's dead. He lived on out in Columbus, and there was one who

lived in Aberdeen whose name is Joe Berry. He's still living, I understand, but he's close to eighty years old. He was born in the Darracott community. Tom Brooks and Mrs. Mary Brooks, his wife, bought this sixty acres west of our place.

M: Would that be where Ed Sanders lives today?

H: No, we're getting farther west, now. Ed Sanders lives on the old Benton place, as far as I know. It's still to the northwest of that the way that road runs. A. C. Sanders lives in the corner, right opposite where the Vinton schoolhouse used to be, by where I went to school. The Benton place starts there and goes to the Whatley's place, which is a mile and a quarter or mile and a half west, then it goes north for over a mile.

M: Do you ever recall a house that would have sat between Dennis Wilson's house and Vinton Cemetery?

H: A house?

M: Yes. It might have been taken down by a cyclone.

H: I don't remember. The only house that I remember between Vinton was the next house down from the school. It is still there and Dennis Wilson owned that. Now, there was a cyclone years back, before I can remember good. It came through there and blew, and did some damage in that community. I probably have heard, but I never heard my dad say anything about where or who it was. I'm kind of under the impression that it was the old Wilson house.

At the same time, I believe, the first bridge across Town Creek, next to Homer Tumlinson, was blown down. That bridge was kind of like a bailey bridge, the way it was constructed. It was similar to the one across Hanging Kettle Creek, and this cyclone turned it upside down. At the same time, going to the northeast, the cyclone probably destroyed the Wilson home, the old-time Wilson home. I believe that's right. It may not have, but I believe that's right.

M: I want to ask you a couple of more questions about other houses there. Can you remember a house directly north from the store?

H: I don't remember a house between Dennis Wilson's old home and the old Vinton store. North of the general store, I don't remember one there. That was before my time. Now probably there was, and I think that it belonged to either the Trotters or the Watsons. It was probably their old homeplace.

M: Does the name Keaton ring a bell?

H: Don't remember; don't come back to me.

M: What about a house south of the road that goes back to the river?

- H: Goes back to the river? The first one leaving the store, would be the Miss Lucy Natural's house. Then as you went around, there used to be a little country road, a lanelike road that went around about a quarter of a mile from the river. The river makes a big bend in there going around to Barton. This road was about a quarter of a mile away from the river, and the first house after you left Miss Lucy Natural's house was--it wasn't a very elaborate house and I'll tell you who used to live there--Woodrow Dobson's parents' house. He doesn't remember that house because he was too young. I remember that I was six or seven years old when I visited down there at Henry Dobson's. I can't remember Woodrow's mother's name, but she, I think, was a Foote. I remember my dad and mother visiting there quite a bit. Then on farther around there was a house on the right, and W. Bradley Andrews was the first person, I knew, who lived there.
- M: Now, let me get this straight. This is the road that goes in front of the store and Lucy Natural's house?
- H: And followed the contour of the river around, except it was about a quarter of a mile or more away from the river bank.
- M: Did this road take you all the way to the old Uithoven house?
- H: Old Barton, that's right. It goes right along in that place. There's a Coltrane place. I don't know what [happened to] Will Coltrane. He's the person that I knew. He was about the age of my dad, and his wife was a Taylor. He had a sister who married a Edens up in Monroe County.
- M: Do you know her name?
- H: Evelyn. She married Brantley Edens. His son, Richard Edens, and I went to school together, and he was, later, a state legislator from Monroe County. I don't know why it doesn't come back to me. This boy that I was in school with flunked out and he went home and he disappeared. The next time they heard from him, he was in Alaska.
- M: Could you tell me a little more about the Dobson house and what it looked like?
- H: I don't remember much about the house that I remember visiting as a kid, but I know it had a nice porch on it, a very nice porch. It was a very nice house.
- M: Can you remember how many rooms it had?
- H: I don't remember how many rooms there were to that house, but I know it had a nice little front yard that we kids liked to play in. Of course, I imagine it was a very good house for in the country out there. Then you went on around to the Coltrane house, as I knew it at that time.
- M: Where is that?

- H: That's the old Uithoven place.
- H: Dr. Uithoven later bought that. Across the road on the right before you got to the Uithoven house on the right, was this F. C. Andrews place. He later moved up next to the Whatleys, at the old Mealer home.
- M: Now, the Andrews house was across the road from the Uithoven house. What road was it across?
- H: That was the road going down from Miss Lucy Natural's, and then on around the river. It got next to this Uithoven place, Coltrane place at that time; got closer to the river. After you left there, you went on down to the ferry which was known as the Barton Ferry place. At that time, Jim Cogsdell lived there and he ran the ferry.
- M: Now, the Cogsdell house would be the one. . . .
- H: Right on the bank of the river, and it was a nice place.
- M: Would that be north of Barton Ferry Road?
- H: Yes, right on the road there, just as you go down where the ferry was. It was sitting right up on top of that hill, and I never knew it to be under water.
- M: Could you describe that house for me?
- H: It was a two-story building, a very nice house. It must have had six or seven or eight rooms in it, probably. It was a big house; it was a nice house.
- M: Did you go visiting there when you were a child?
- H: I've been visiting there a many a time. Jim Cogsdell had one son, Jim Dean, and that boy turned out bad. He went to Columbus. He was fooling around with bands and such as that, you know, and he got in trouble, probably was an addict of some kind. That's what his first cousin told me; I don't know that to be so.
- M: Did they serve you food when you would go over there to visit?
- H: Oh, yes. They invited you to come spend the day with them, and they'd put on a spread at noon, you know.
- M: What kind of dishes did they have?
- H: Man, they had chicken and they had meats of every kind, pies and cakes. I've seen so many people come from my dad and mother's house on Sundays. If they were to come to my house, now, I'd run out the back door and keep going.
- M: (laughter) Do you remember what kind of dishes they fed you from?

- H: Dishes? They had the real nice platters, as far as dishes were concerned.
- M: Do you remember what they looked like?
- H: Yes, they were kind of a blue. My mother had a set of dishes that were kind of blue, very classy at that time. And at that time, she had Rogers Silverplate silverware. I've got the initials of the silversmith. It was Rogers silver, and it was considered to be nice then, you know. Of course, it was nothing compared to later on. We had sure enough real silver.
- M: What about when you went to the Cogsdell house? What kind of dishes did they have?
- H: Well, they had. . . . He ran this old ferry, and he married. . . . I don't know who he married. It just won't come back to me, but he had two brothers, Dan and Barney. Barney lived where the old Ab Duke house was. Roberts own it now, I believe. Dan Cogsdell was on the police force in West Point for a long time, and he shot old man Gresham. Rufe Gresham went around to his back door, and Dan thought that someone was breaking into his house. He shot Rufe in the leg. He always flopped. You always knew he was coming because he was flop-footed, but he was a good policeman.
- M: Were there any other houses right around there that you can recall? Right around the Cogsdell house?
- H: Well, there was a pretty nice house, not an elaborate house, but I reckon it had five or six rooms where J. E. McGraw lived. I don't know what it was originally known as, but their land was adjoining this Ab Duke property on the south.
- M: That would be north of Vinton?
- H: Oh, yeah, that's north of Vinton. Then just south of that there was another fairly nice house, not elaborate; it was a farmhouse. Then going toward the river and through pretty rough country back in there, there was the old Hollins place.
- M: Would that be Levi Hollins?
- H: Levi Hollins. Kin to his sister later bought that property. I've forgotten what they were called. Later, Tode Wilson bought it. His son lives right out here on Lone Oak Drive, Buddy we called him.
- M: Does the name Beard ring a bell?
- H: Beard, that don't hit me anyway. I don't know why. They just came along before my time, I guess.
- M: Now, what about Moores?

H: Moore is a black person; he was a blacksmith.

M: Where was he a blacksmith at?

H: Out on the old Benton place, about two hundred yards in front of the house, between there and the road. That's out where Breitzkreutz live. Do you know where they live? You leave A. C. Sanders's place and you go west. The first house on the left was theirs. A road went up to that Benton place, and the first little place you came to was a three-room cabin. Grant Moore lived there. Grant Moore was his name, and he was a blacksmith.

M: Do you know his wife's name?

H: Didn't know her name, but he was a good blacksmith.

M: What kind of things did he fix?

H: Anything, he could do anything.

M: Did people still rely on him to take care of their horses?

H: He could shoe horses as good as anybody. He could set the shoes. You know, when you shoe a horse, you got to set that shoe. He could do that as good as anybody. He was an expert at it. And wheels, filling wheels, wagon wheels and buggy wheels at that time, he could do that; he could even make the ferrets for it. He could do anything.

M: Does the name Henry Mitchell mean anything to you?

H: Henry Mitchell is the one that I knew from down around the Waverly community, and he was black.

M: What about the name Henry Thomas?

H: Henry Thomas is a black, and he lives by the road going down to the old Waverly mansion now.

M: Do you recall hearing your father talk about a Henry Thomas who lived before that?

H: No, I don't think so. There were some Thomases raised on our place. There was a George Thomas, a Immanuel Thomas, and one we called Coonie--his name was Johnny--and Albert Thomas. We called him Al, and he lives on this road on west from the Whatley place. He still lives there.

M: That's the Barton Ferry/Payne Field Road?

H: That's right. You saw it just as you were coming west across Hanging Kettle Creek. It's the first house on the right.

M: I think this Henry Thomas would have been his grandfather.

H: I don't know. They were kinfolks; they were kin I have an idea--Al, and Immanuel, and all of that. When they were children, they had a sister that married a Mitchell down in the Waverly community. I know they had some roots down there somewhere. Now, Immanuel lives at the Whites Station out here. He's ninety-two or ninety-three years old.

M: He would be interesting to talk to.

H: I imagine he would.

M: Do you recall any old houses along what is now the old Vinton Road, south of the general store?

H: South of the store?

M: Between the store and Ed Wilson's house?

H: No, now there was . . . I don't remember, but there was a house there, an old house down there toward the corner where the Vinton Road comes out on the Barton Ferry Road. When you turn up that road going toward A. C. Sanders, right in the corner there, there used to be a house on the east side of the road, east of Willie Shirley's. I don't remember anything about it. The next house on the right was Ed Wilsons, a grandson of the old man Henry Wilson. He had a brother Willie, and they bought that place there on that corner, 123 acres, I believe.

M: What about the Nevels?

H: The Nevels, I never knew them. Later on I knew some Nevels here in West Point, but I don't know if they were any relation to them out there or not. I doubt it.

M: I don't think that you ever told me what your grandmother's name was.

H: My grandmother's name was Rebbecca.

M: What was her maiden name?

H: Hudson.

M: Was she from around here?

H: No, she was born out at Abbott in 1836.

M: What was your grandfather's name?

H: My grandfather's name was Nat, and they called him Matt. I got something I want to show you. (brings a document with the following

names) This Taylor, W. T. Taylor, and I think the Coltranes, William Coltrane and his sister Mrs. Edens, I believe had their roots up in Monroe County.

M: Who is R. W. Collins?

H: I don't know of that.

M: Here's a name that came up once before. What about Yeats?

H: Yeats. It don't come back to me; I never have known any Yeats.

M: That would have been long time ago, because he's buried in the cemetery, I believe.

H: In what cemetery?

M: Vinton.

H: Vinton? The old Taylor cemetery.

M: Right.

H: Yes, that's right, too. I looked over there. I didn't know this Sanderson. Joe Cox, he's got some . . . no, they're not related. Dukeminier, he and my daddy were raised together.

M: Who is that?

H: James E. Dukeminier and the Stronges. They came along at the same time. I heard my dad mention Burt. I don't remember why I remember that, but it keeps coming back to me, a Burt. I can't remember what he talked about, but the name still stays with me a little bit. Now R. W. Collins, I don't know. I think he was from down in the Waverly community somewhere, and the Youngs were from down in the Waverly community.

M: We're reading from a document, called "Resolutions of Beat No. 1," and it's a document that was drawn up on November 14, 1875. What was Beat No. 1?

H: Beat One. It ran from right east of West Point here, on top of what we called "the hill," just as you go up the top of the hill, that line ran due north and south. All the property valuation east of Chugatonchee Creek was in District Two. Waters fought for years over that because Beat One didn't have revenues to build roads or do anything with. District Two had all the city valuation, the railroad, and public utilities, and they could do anything they wanted to. They fought for years before they ever got the district line changed for Highway 50.

M: So Beat One was a political division?

- H: Yes, a political division.
- M: District One was divided by a line. . . .
- H: Divided by a line, right here.
- M: Okay, so, it's one section east of Eshman Avenue.
- H: That's right. See, this was the area, this creek along here and up this line here. (refers to map)
- M: So, it went all the way up to the Monroe/Clay County line and then followed the east side of Tibbee Creek and ran all the way to the Tombigbee.
- H: That's right, exactly right. Now, you see, all this was in District Two from one mile east of Eshman Avenue to Chuquatonchee Creek, but they had all the valuation below the creek.
- M: That really hindered the development of the land.
- H: Of District One, certainly. They fought for years over it and brought that line straight out here plumb to the river on that section there, right through there.
- M: Highway 50 became the boundary line?
- H: That's right.
- M: I see. What year did they make the new division?
- H: That must have been in the late 1930s. It must have been in 1936 or 1937, along there. That's right.
- M: Your family has been involved in politics for quite some while. I think your father was justice of the peace.
- H: He was justice of the peace for twenty-eight years. I was tax assessor for twelve years, and chancery clerk eight years.
- M: What was your father's full name?
- H: Van Alphonso Mordecai Howard. I never knew where he got a Spanish name from. Alphonso and Mordecai are Spanish derivatives, I think.
- M: Your grandmother must have liked them.
- H: I don't know; I never knew, but it's a biblical name.
- M: What offices were held back when that part of the country was called a beat rather than a precinct?
- H: Well, my granddaddy was supervisor, I believe, for sixteen years.

- M: Were the people who were responsible for making sure that the roads were fixed and things like that called supervisors?
- H: Oh, yes. Well, back then the people had to work so many days on the road to pay the road tax. They had a road tax then, and you had to work so many days, three days I believe it was, a year on the road. Every person who was twenty-one years old had to work three days on the road. They didn't use blacks because blacks didn't pay taxes.
- M: That's how they did all their road maintenance?
- H: That's all the maintenance they had. Now, they didn't have any road work except in the summertime. Then they could get through them pretty good, but they were bad in the winter, terrible.
- M: The supervisor was in charge of making sure the roads were serviced?
- H: And they set the mills, you know, like they do now. Of course, the system is more elaborate now than it was then.
- M: Did your father do that after your grandfather died?
- H: No, he was the justice of the peace, squire.
- M: Your father was called squire?
- H: Yes, Squire Howard. They called him that a lot. Then after I came back out of the army, I got into politics for twenty years. So between my granddad's sixteen years in politics, my dad's twenty-eight years, my twenty years, Lee Howard's twenty-six years, and Howard Coleman's twenty years as chancery clerk, the Howard family has been in politics a long time.
- M: Who is Captain Howard?
- H: That's my dad.
- M: How come they called him Captain?
- H: All the blacks on the place called him Captain, and when we were little kids we started to all call him Captain. The Captain, that's what we called him all his life. If we had called him Dad or something like that, he wouldn't have known we were talking to him.
- M: So, it didn't really have any significance?
- H: No significance, just got it from that source.
- M: Was your father a postal clerk?
- H: Yes, he was a postal clerk down at that old store building there at old Vinton, and he was also a postal clerk at the. . . . I can't think of the little station up there north of Vinton.

M: Whites Station?

H: North of White Station, on up farther. Bennet. That's right. He was postmaster up there. It was a pretty big community up there at that time. I remember hearing him tell about going up there on Monday and coming home on Saturday. He'd ride his horse up there. He had a place where he stayed and he came back on the weekend.

M: I see. When your father was a postmaster at Vinton, what were his responsibilities?

H: I think he worked as a postal clerk, and at times when he wasn't busy in the post office, he was busy in the store as a real clerk.

M: Who would he have worked for then?

H: Old man Trotter, and later on probably for old man Henry Watson II. See, the Trotters and the Watsons were kin, I think. The Trotter owned that property in there at old Vinton first. Then it entered into Watson's hands. That's my understanding about it; I think that's right.

M: Did he ever describe how mail got to him?

H: No, he never did; I don't know how they did it. This county, back early in that time, was part of the Lowndes County. This county is made up of Lowndes, Monroe, and Chickasaw, and Oktibbeha. They made this Clay County out of that. At that time, they called it Colfax. Well, they didn't like that name because Colfax was a Northern general, you know, so they changed it to Clay. (laughter) There used to be a safe, and it's still in there at the chancery clerk's office now. It had Colfax County across the safe in gold lettering, but they didn't like that. They never did change the name on that safe. They let it stay there.

M: Did your dad ever describe the inside of the store to you?

H: Only one end, the end next to the road.

M: Would that be the west side of the building?

H: The end of the west side of the building was where the post office was.

M: Would it have been just one corner of the store?

H: No, it was across the end of the store, I think. Well, it was a 10'x 16' offset in it, the way he explained it. I heard him talk about it. I don't know how wide that building was, but it was a pretty big building to be in the country for those times. That building must have been thirty or thirty-five feet or thirty-six feet wide, and I reckon that thing was fifty feet long. It was a big building.

M: Was this all one room?

H: All one, built into one space. Old man Poss lived there, and of course, he never did partition it off. I know that the post office was in the corner of that building up there because that's where Poss had his gun supply. He worked on guns and pistols and such stuff as that. I remember going down there into that building for some reason, when he lived there, several times. His equipment was in the post office part. Well, it didn't take very much of a post office. I don't know how many routes they had out there. I don't know whether they had one or two or what.

M: Did they have pigeon holes on the wall?

H: No, I couldn't tell you.

M: That was all gone?

H: I don't have no idea. But, I imagine that the person who went to the post office to get his mail called for it at the window.

M: I see.

H: I don't think a place like that would have had boxes then.

M: Did your dad ever recall a Mr. Miller?

H: Miller?

M: Is that too far back?

H: Too far back.

M: Did your grandmother ever tell you anything about the store?

H: Well, nothing except that she. . . . Of course, my daddy, her son, worked there as a postman. I guess, I never did hear him say how old he was when he was working there, but he was just a young man at the time. I never knew where my dad got as much education as he had. He wrote a beautiful hand, and with any kind of problems, arithmetic or algebra or geometry or such as that, he could always come up with the answer. I wasn't smart enough to do what he did. He could take a square and do more with it than a monkey could with a peanut. Do so many things with a square, you know. He was a pretty good carpenter.

M: Did your grandmother ever mention a building beside the Vinton Cemetery?

H: Well, I've forgotten the name of the church, Pilgrim's Rest, I believe. I believe that was the name of the church that was down there. They moved it from up in Monroe County down to Vinton. That's where my dad went to church when he was young, with my grandmother.

M: Was that down by the Vinton Cemetery?

H: It was right in that area, and I think the church was. . . . I don't know what size it was, but I think it was right across the Vinton Road in front of that store building or it might have been to the north of it a little bit.

M: Was there any other building by it?

H: I never heard my grandmother say if there was or was not, but I knew that she used to go to church there. When they moved it up to Bethel, up at Darracott, and built it where it is now, my grandmother and Mother and Daddy, all went to Bethel. They moved all their letters up there and attended church up there. That's where I went to church when I was a youngster. All of them had buggies and surreys and so on back then. They got around pretty good, in the summertime especially. In the wintertime traveling was kind of out, you know. They didn't have any roads, and couldn't get around like they do now.

M: So, you didn't go to church much in the wintertime?

H: Not very much. We went if it wasn't mighty bad, I'll tell you. Well, we had country churches and had preaching twice a month. Of course, Sunday school was every Sunday, but if you didn't get to Sunday school you went to church anyway. That was kind of a must; you had to go to church. That was the way I was brought up.

M: What did you do when you didn't go to church?

H: When we didn't go to church, it was raining and we couldn't do anything. We had to stay in, but if it wasn't, you'd go to church. (laughter)

M: They didn't send you out to work, though?

H: No, no, no. Every summer, they had what they call a "protracted meeting." They'd have one week of two services a day. I've seen that whole hillside by Bethel Baptist covered with vehicles, buggies, and surreys, and wagons, and every other thing.

M: Did anybody take pictures back then?

H: Not very much.

M: You talked about a telephone. When did you get your telephone in?

H: I was eight or nine years old, something like that. My daddy built a line about a mile across from our house to old man Ben Bradley's and attached it to the phone. Whoever owned it let him attach onto the phone line. When my mother wanted to call anybody except Mrs. Bradley, why Mrs. Bradley would connect them up with a switchboard, you know.

M: Did your father have to string his own wire?

H: His own wire, built his own telephone.

M: What kind of wire did he use?

H: He used the same wire that they use now, the very same.

M: What kind of telephone did you have?

H: We had one of these old turn around phones. I'd give anything if I owned it right now. I don't know of but one in the country like it; it's out at Montpelier.

M: What did he string the wire on?

H: He was a pretty good mechanic, electrician I guess you'd call it. He could set the poles about one hundred yards apart or one hundred and fifty, a long ways, and string that wire. He put it on cross-arms, just like they use today. They weren't as long as we use today, two-and-one-half or three feet long. They put trench knobs on the crossarms. They were insulated; you drove them down. Then he'd take his wire and twist it around to hold it in the groove, and for those early years, it was pretty good.

M: When did most of the rest of the county out there get telephones?

H: Old man Ben Bradley got it first when the line came down there. He was better off financially than most of the people of the community. He was considered one of the top fellows. But he built that telephone line. It started down from Darracott and ran down to the Andrews place, down to the old Bob Bradley place, then on to his place. He and Bob Bradley, his brother, built that line down to old man Ben's. Then my daddy decided to run it to our house. Everytime somebody would get sick or anything, my daddy had to go over to the Bradley's to call the doctor. That was the only phone in the country, and they came from all around, from a mile or two around, to call Dr. Darracott. If he'd be out, his wife, Miss Nettie, would tell them that he would be in and he'd call you. Well, he'd call Mrs. Bradley and Mrs. Bradley would call us.

M: So, that's how that worked?

H: That's how it worked. That's exactly how it worked.

M: What year was that in?

H: I must of been twelve or thirteen, about twelve years old.

M: What year were you born in, again?

H: 1905. I was just a kid, and I'd hear people coming by at all the times of the night to call Dr. Darracott. Someone's wife was going

to have a baby, or somebody thought they had pneumonia, and Dr. Darracott would be on his way the next day. You could depend on him because he'd be there.

M: You talked about seeing steamboats come up the river one time. Could you tell me about them?

H: I've seen them three or four times, four or five times at the most. At that time, it always came to pick up this lumber cut by this stave mill and hickory mill.

M: And what mill was that?

H: That was Chafin's Lumber Company.

M: Could you spell that?

H: C-H-A-F-I-N. He was still living on the river around his mill, there through the week. Sometimes he boarded up there at Early Duke's house. His wife visited in the Duke home, up there, and that's where he met her. He married her and her name was Verna.

M: So, he married Verna Duke?

H: No. Verna is the aunt of Mrs. Bradley.

M: Okay.

H: There were two of those girls, Olive Maude, and Irene.

M: Could you tell me a little bit about what the boat looked like?

H: You know, I was only a kid twelve or thirteen years old and I couldn't describe it, but I thought that was the biggest thing that ever floated. It was a good, long boat. I would say that thing was forty feet long, something like that. Oh, it was more than forty feet; that thing must have been sixty feet long or seventy feet.

M: Did it have a paddlewheel?

H: It had a paddle on the rear.

M: Was it a one-story boat?

H: Well, part of it was. It had what they call a poop deck. (laughter) It was built up as kind of the rear of the boat. I remember that part of it. It didn't draw very much water because I know they didn't put much in the ship below deck. When they got through loading, they had that thing loaded down pretty heavy.

M: Did they bring these staves down to the boat?

- H: Staves and hickory. They cut this hickory in two-inch strips, you know, and some would be six feet long; some of them would be twenty inches, two feet, six feet, and all like that.
- M: Do you, by any chance, remember the name of the company that they sold this to in Mobile?
- H: Don't have any idea.
- M: I see.
- H: It's some big handle company. It might have been shipped overseas, as far as I know. Mobile was a port at the time so it could have been shipped overseas. Now, this boy here, that runs this Dimension Company, ships all of his wood overseas, practically, for skis and all like that. Hickory, that's all he fools with.
- M: Last time I was here you told a very nice story about your father building one of the Barton ferrys.
- H: Yes. He built that.
- M: I was wondering if you could describe the ferry and how it worked.
- H: Well, I helped cut the runners for it, and those runners were twenty-six inches wide. They were 3"x 26"x 25'. I think the bottom was made out of heart pine. They built it upside down, I guess. I don't know how they did it. My dad built it, but I never did go down because I was working at the sawmill at the time.
- M: What kind of saw did you use to cut these trees with?
- H: A crosscut saw.
- M: Was it just you or you and another man?
- H: Me and my brother. We were tall gangly boys, and we thought we were mighty good saw hands. At that time, we had good timber, all that virgin pine out there, and we could cut anywhere from twelve, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen thousand feet a day. That's a lot of logs. The specifications for the lumber for the ferry called for all heart wood; had to be all heart wood.
- M: Is that the center of the pine?
- H: The center of the pine. It all had to be heart, the center of the pine. Old man Hale that I worked for, Hale Lumber Company had some trees. These logs that we cut were all about the size of this table, long things. He had to get oxen. He had lots of mules, but mules just can't move what oxen can. He had to go up to someplace in Monroe County, back in there where there was a mill and a fellow had four yokes of oxen. Hale got that man to come down there, and get these logs out because they were all in a bad place. He had to

go up hills, a rough place to get into. That fellow brought those oxen down there, and got those logs out to carry to the mill. He handled those oxen just with a whip. He never touched one of them. They were beautiful, and they were monstrous things. I guess they would weigh fourteen or fifteen hundred pounds, monstrous things. He never touched one with that whip, but he'd pop it and they knew exactly what to do by the way he popped it and where he popped it and all. They used an eight-wheel wagon to put those long logs on, and he hauled those things, one log at a time, to the mill. I blocked for that mill where they cut the logs.

M: I wanted to ask you where the steamboats that you saw stopped? Did they stop at the Bartons Ferry?

H: Evidently they did, and evidently they must have been coming up to Vinton. Well, at that time, I don't know. I kind of doubt there was anything shipped up there. The farther down the river you got, the deeper it got. You had more draft. But I doubt them bringing any commodities and such stuff up there. They could have, but I doubt it. At that time, you could go to Aberdeen or go to West Point or go to Columbus and get anything you wanted. You had other means of transportation that made steamboats useless for bringing commodities or what have you up there. The train was so much faster than the steamboat. When you put your carload of cotton on a train, you don't know whether it's going to get there tomorrow or next week or next month. Probably the track would tear up. The steamboats would come up there and go on up to what we call "the whirl," turn around, and come back and anchor until they loaded that boat.

M: Did they stop down the river at Bartons Ferry?

H: They did probably. Now there might have been a mill down at Waverly. There was another mill down there that cut hickory and staves. I don't know this for sure, but I think they probably would stop there to get those staves or hickory. It seems like I heard my dad say that there was a mill down there, and that the steamboats would pick up their merchandise, their timber. Of course, it was all white oak and hickory. They used white oak to make whiskey barrels out of. It was shipped to Scotland, England, and Europe. I don't think we made that much whiskey in the United States, at that time. (laughter)

M: Not even on the riverbanks? (laughter)

H: That's right, exactly. Well now, you're talking about making liquor. I was going hunting from where I lived all up and down the river there, and I've counted half-a-dozen stills while I was squirrel hunting.

M: Did you know Joe Harris?

H: Yes sir, I know him. He was a liquor distiller.

M: He was?

H: Yes, sir. I bought many a quart of liquor from him.

M: Did he ever run a legal still?

H: No, no way.

M: What else did he do for a living?

H: Nothing, not a thing. He'd do a little fishing, but that was just a cover-up.

M: How did he fish?

H: With a net.

M: Would it be a seine net?

H: I used to do a lot of fishing when I was a kid. We knitted our own nets.

M: Can you tell me how you did that?

H: It always depended on the size we wanted it. We knew how many stitches it took to make that particular diameter. My dad made these needles, and we made the net stitches. In less than a week's time we'd have a net made.

M: Were they woven or were they like. . . .

H: No, you just go round and round. There's just one way. I could do it now if I had the needle and the thread to show you how. It wasn't a slipknot. It was anchored the way you tied that knot when you drew the twine down. It would stay there. When we got it made, we'd tar it so it would preserve them.

M: Did your dad tar the nets?

H: He tarred the nets; he'd boil this tar. He had a floor where he tarred nets. You didn't want to waste the tar. He fixed the floor so it wouldn't leak. He put the nets in the tar before he'd put hoops in it. He would tar it real good, then he put the hoops on it. It slanted on the way back, you know.

M: So it was like a cone?

H: That's right. There were so many stitches to a row, and you'd take up two links in it with each round to draw it in.

M: I see.

H: When you got to the throat, you'd want a throat not over sixteen inches at the most. Fifteen inches is what we generally made them.

When the fish went in, it was strung back so that the throat stayed up in the center of the net and the fish would stay inside. They had two compartments to each net, the front compartment that they went in, and about the last six or seven feet was the last compartment. Fish went back to the last compartment and couldn't get out. You could bait fish which finally got to be against the law, but you could take anything over the water if you wanted to. For instance, it doesn't sound good, but you could kill a rabbit or something like that, and the flies would bloat it and make the maggots drop off in the water. That's the best thing in the world to catch fish. (laughter)

M: So, you said you put that inside the net?

H: No, no, no, it stayed above the water. The maggots would drop off into the water, and the fish would be after it. It was a worm, you know, and he'd settle on down into the net.

M: Now, I'm a little confused here. How big is the mouth of your net?

H: The mouth of the net would be six feet.

M: How long would it be?

H: It'd be about eighteen or nineteen feet long, probably twenty.

M: And so, each time you put on another row of stitches on that net, another three or four inches, you'd bring it in two stitches?

H: Bring it so many stitches to draw it in to just come down to a throat. The throat would be about fifteen inches in diameter. Then you'd go back to where you started drawing in for that throat and pick up there to start your second compartment.

M: So, there's one compartment inside the other.

H: That's right, but the throat would come down like this. (draws an illustration)

M: It's sort of like a telescope.

H: Well, up here where we'd knit a throat, right here, for the first compartment--that's the first one, you see. When you come back here, you'd have a throat here.

M: How big was the opening?

H: Then the last opening back here would have a small throat so that when the fish came in here, got restless and wanted to come on back in here, there wouldn't be anyway he could get out.

M: Did everybody fish with these kind of nets?

H: I think that my dad, me and my brother, the Duke boys, and old man Ab Duke did more fishing than all the rest of the people out there together.

M: Would you stand on the banks with one of those nets?

H: No, no.

M: Would you stake it down?

H: No, you took that out; you put it across the boat. My dad had built a boat eighteen feet long. That's the shortest boat they ever fooled with because those nets were pretty heavy when they got wet. You took a net or two nets or three nets if you wanted. You put them on top of the boat and just went up to set them out where you want. They had special places where they wanted to set them. If they could find a place where there was a runnel or a channel, that would be a fine place to set a net, you know.

M: Why?

H: Because the fish go upstream and if you'd get a channel. . . . They had one place down there at Hilliard's bluff that was about twelve or fourteen feet or eighteen feet wide, and it was pretty deep. Those fish came to go up that stream, and you just set your net there. They wouldn't let you have those wings on the net. It was against the law then, but the fish would go up there and fill that net up.

M: How many fish would you catch in one of those?

H: Oh, my, I don't know. We had fish all the time. I think the biggest fish I ever saw come out of the Tombigbee was a sturgeon that weighed 307 pounds. I caught many a catfish weighing thirty-five, forty, fifty, or sixty pounds over there.

M: Were there many sturgeon down here?

H: Not many, very few.

M: Was it a real treat when you got one?

H: Well, we didn't think so. We thought the blue cat, channel cat were the best fish. We caught trout, of course, but a lot of people just loved the channel cat or blue cat. There's a difference between a blue cat and a channel cat.

M: What's the difference

H: The channel cat gets to be a larger fish faster than the blue cat. A Blue cat will get to be five or six or seven pounds; a channel cat will get to be a big thing.

M: What other kinds of fish did you get?

H: Well, there were drum and buffalo.

M: What's a buffalo?

H: That's a fish that . . . that's what we call. . . . I'm not going to say it, but anyway. . . .

M: Oh, you didn't like it. (laughter)

H: They were so bony. They were good fish. It made for a very good flavor, but it had so many bones. The bones were not like a channel cat or a trout or any of the fish like that. The bones would be out in the fillet, just little bitty fine bones, terrible. A lot of people liked them and ate them because they thought it was the best fish in the world. It can't be too bad.

M: What did you do with all your fish?

H: Sold them.

M: Where would you sell them?

H: You could sell any amount of fish that you caught in West Point.

M: Did you always bring them into town?

H: Brought them into town. Well, when they got the old Model-T, it didn't take long to come to town, and the catfish would live. You could just put them in a wet tow sack, and he'd live all morning.

M: Did you have to clean the fish?

H: No, no, no.

M: That sounds like a good deal to me.

H: I can skin a fish real quick. There's an art in that.

M: What kind of a knife did you use?

H: You have to have a sharp knife, hang him up, cut a ring around his neck, strip him just to the skin on about three or four places right on the sides, take you a pair of pliers, and peel him off. That's just simple, very simple.

M: When did you make your nets?

H: They did it at night. It was kind of bad up until the alladin lamp came along.

M: What's the alladin lamp?

H: Oh, you don't know what that is? Well, you haven't lived yet.

M: Well, you better tell me. (laughter)

H: (laughter) You had electric light. The alladin lamp was really a nice light. It made a beautiful light. I don't know what the thing was made out of, but it had a wick in it that was made out of something. When you sat this chimney down on it, it was just like an electric light.

M: It was that bright?

H: It made a beautiful light, absolutely. Now, they didn't last forever. They'd last a month and a half or two months, you know. Then you'd have to have another wick. They were easy to put on. All you had to do to turn the lamp on was just light it.

M: Did you light it with a match?

H: Lit it with a match.

M: Did it use kerosene?

H: It used kerosene, commonly known in the south as lamp oil.

M: What did you do at night?

H: Well, in the summertime if we weren't so tired, if we weren't working in the fields, we'd make nets. We had a pretty big house that I was raised in. We had plenty of room, and we just knitted nets.

M: It was just you, and your dad, and your brother?

H: I had Dad and I had two brothers and a sister.

M: Now, you didn't tell me your brothers' names.

H: Both my brothers are dead, and my sister Ellen is dead.

M: What were your brothers' names?

H: One of them was named Van Alphonso Mordecai. He was the youngest one and the other one was Nathaniel Kolb Howard. He was named after my mother's surname. She was a Kolb of German descent, and she came from Fort Deposit, Alabama, about sixty miles south of Montgomery.

M: So you and your brothers would sit around and make these?

H: Oh, we'd hunt through the day if we weren't in the fields working, if it was wet or anything. In the fall we hunted when we got the crops out and all like that. Then we hunted or we fished all the time. That was our routine, just fishing or hunting or making knitted nets.

- M: What other kind of nets did people fish with out there?
- H: That's the only kind there were. There weren't many people in that country who had nets, except us. I never saw any nets out there.
- M: Who taught you how to make them?
- H: My dad learned somewhere. I don't know where he learned.
- M: Do you think he learned it from his dad?
- H: No, I don't think so. Back then, you know, they sold this twine to make nets. I think there was probably an illustration book or something, and he picked it up from there. I don't know that, but I imagine that's what happened.
- M: Maybe, he sat and made them in the store for awhile.
- H: I don't know. He could have as far as I know. As early as I can remember, he'd buy twine when he'd come to West Point, this heavy twine cord. It was cotton then, of course. They didn't have nylon and such as that, and they would buy cotton twine in big hanks. When we got ready to thread our needle, we'd just thread it and start back to work. It works pretty fast if you know how to do it. Mr. Ab Duke never knitted a net in his life. He never had anything to do with it, but he and my dad fished together. My dad always made the nets and the boats. (laughter) In the wintertime we trapped a lot when we were kids.
- M: What kind of traps did you use?
- H: At that time, we used a number three Victor.
- M: Was that made by Victor Company? Or was that a style?
- H: I reckon, it was called Victor Trap Company. That's what it was called.
- M: Do you know where it came from?
- H: Sears Roebuck.
- M: What did you do with your hides?
- H: Sold them to F. C. Taylor Fur Company.
- M: Where were they?
- H: In St. Louis. And there was another one, the Fungston Fur Company.
- M: Where was that?

H: St. Louis.

M: When you sent your hides up there, what kind of information did you send with them?

H: You didn't send them any information except your return address, and the number of hides and the kind. In just three or four days, you'd have your check back.

M: Is that what most everybody did with their hides out there?

H: Not many people out there did that. My dad and Mr. Ab Duke, me and my brother caught more furs than all the rest of the country put together.

M: What kind of hides did you bring in mostly?

H: We liked to bring in the coon and the mink, and we caught a lot of muskrat. We caught a lot of mink, and mink brought a good price back then. I remember when I was a kid, me and my brother were going to school, and we decided we'd catch us a mink down this Dry Creek that ran through our place. We'd catch muskrats. When we'd come home in the afternoon, we'd come by and run the trap, set them, and reset them if we caught anything and we generally did. I remember we just decided to catch us a mink. We found a sink hole that looked mighty good. We set a trap and caught us a big black mink. That mink brought us twenty-eight dollars.

M: What year was that?

H: Oh, man, I don't know; that was so long ago. It must have been 1916 or 1917, along there. (laughter)

M: You must have thought you were real wealthy.

H: Oh, yeah. Well, we made a lot of money out of those hides. You'd take a muskrat, and man, we'd catch muskrats all the time. I'd take an apple and catch a muskrat every night. If I had ten traps, I'd catch ten muskrats. Just put that apple up over the trap and they'd really look for it. Now the mink, you have to know how to catch them because he's very suspicious about anything. Coon are pretty easy to catch. You have to catch them on a slope bank, and set your trap where he comes in there. It's easy to do.

M: What did you do with the meat from the animals that you caught?

H: Well, the muskrats are no good and your mink's no good. They are not edible. Possum, I wouldn't eat one of them things at all. Their furs weren't very good, anyway. The coon was good meat. A lot of people didn't know that and don't know it now. The coon is excellent meat if you know how to cook it, know how to prepare it.

M: How did you prepare the coon?

H: Well, that hind leg, in the ham, there's a musk in it; you've got to remove that musk. That's easy to do and easy to find. That's all it is to it. Then you have to know how to parboil it and then bake him. It's delicious.

M: What is parboiling?

H: It's sort of like a steam. At that time, you didn't have pressure cookers. If you had a pressure cooker, you could put him in there and just pressure cook him for awhile until he was tender. Then, when he's cooked, you bake him. It was like barbecue, and it was delicious.

M: Did you give the meat away quite often when you'd catch a lot of them?

H: Yes. We'd give it to anybody who wanted it. We generally had more coon than we knew what to do with, and you'd get tired of eating it anyway.

M: What other kind of fur-bearing animals did you get?

H: Well, there was the possum, of course, and the lynx, and the otters. I only caught one otter. That was over on Buttahatchie. I caught one of those in my lifetime. That was a pretty thing but they are hard to catch because they'll cut their foot off. If you catch him by his feet, front foot especially, he'll cut his foot off.

M: What about beavers?

H: At that time, we didn't have many. Now we've got so many we don't know what to do with them. I saw a boy up at Una the other day, up at the bank. I was up there and he had a monstrous beaver in the back of his truck. Neal Smith was his name, and I said, "Neal, where did you get that beaver?" He said, "I caught him." "Now what kind of trap did you catch him in?" He said, "Number three trap." I said, "How'd you hold him with such a small trap?" He said, "They're not hard to hold." I said, "Didn't he drown himself?" He said, "Yes." He fixed it so the beaver drowned himself, set it so that it would sink him and drown him. The next day, of course, there was nothing wrong with him so he took the hide. He just put him in the truck and bought him on. He was coming to West Point, and he brought the beaver on by. He was a monster. I asked him what that hide would be worth. He said, "About thirty-five dollars." We used to have red fox. They weren't worth catching; two or three dollars was all you could get for one. Do you know what a red fox is worth now? A first class hide of a big fox is worth a hundred dollars.

M: There aren't as many of them around anymore, I take it.

H: No. If they were here, a person could catch them all. All you have to do is go out in the middle of the woods somewhere, get you a

rooster, and put him up there in a cage where the fox couldn't get him, put your traps in the bottom of that, and catch everyone of them. When the old rooster crowed two or three times, you'd have a fox. (laughter)

M: When you were a boy, how did people find out about where to sell their hides?

H: Back then, I guess, I'd say we were raised on the Commercial Appeal and the Chicago Tribune. It was always a day late, you know, but in my earlier days, until I was about six or seven years old, I guess, we got our mail out of Aberdeen and picked it up at B. B. [Ben] Bradley's. Then they changed that route to come out to and turn around in front of Ab Duke's place. That's where we got the paper. It was always a day late, but we had the news. We didn't have a radio, you know.

M: Did everybody get the Commercial Appeal?

H: No, we were one of the few. That mail got to our box at about eleven o'clock everyday. Charlie Kehl was the mail carrier at the time. A. A. Duke, old man Ab, would go to the mailbox, get the paper, and read it. By the time we got over there, he'd have it back in the box. He could beat anybody I ever saw about reading the paper. He just had one eye, but he'd read that paper and tell you anything in it in just thirty minutes, in just no time flat. I guess you've heard of people who could just turn pages and tell you everything on them. Well, I've known two people like that. Old man Ab could read the paper and tell you everything in it in thirty minutes, and old Dr. Campbell--I was guardian for him--could just look through a magazine and tell you everything in it. He was a doctor and a brilliant person, but he threw his life away. He was a dope-fiend addict of all kinds.

M: So most people got the Commercial Appeal if they got the paper. Some people got the Chicago Tribune, too?

H: We took the Tribune, the Chicago Tribune, I don't know if they still print it or not; I reckon they still do. We got the Commercial Appeal, and of course, there were two magazines that we always got. They were the Country Gentleman and the Progressive Farmer. They were a must; we had to have those. We came up reading those things, and of course as kids, we always wanted the funny paper and all like that to read. My grandmother didn't read the Sunday paper on Sunday, you know. She was one of these old-timers.

M: So, how did you get around that?

H: We didn't read it when she was around.

M: (laughter)

H: Of course, my dad and mother didn't care, but my grandmother didn't want to see us reading the funny paper on Sunday. We were supposed to read the Bible or something else, not the funny paper. (laughter)

M: Why did you choose the Progressive Farmer magazine and the Country Gentleman?

H: I don't know why, but we took them for as long as I can remember, before I can remember, I guess. I still take both of them. My stepson was here and I said, "These are old-timers, the old Progressive Farmer and Country Gentleman." He looked back and saw that they started that thing in 1860 or 1870 or something.

M: Did your grandmother ever get Harpers?

H: Get what?

M: Harpers Weekly?

H: Yes sir, I remember that name. It was a magazine, wasn't it?

M: Yes.

H: I remember that name, but I don't remember ever seeing that magazine. I remember that my grandmother took it because I heard her say Harpers magazine. We took more magazines than anybody in the country.

M: Did you pass them around after you were done with them?

H: If anybody wanted them, yes. We would give the papers to the Dukes or the McGraws and anybody. When we went to the mailbox, I'd pick up the mail, and the next day when everybody in our family had seen it, and we carried it back to the McGraws or the Dukes or to anybody who wanted it.

M: In your time, was there always a mailman?

H: Always a mailman in my time, absolutely.

M: Just before you were born, was there a time when there wasn't a mailman?

H: There must of been and I never knew what date that was. I knew that my dad got the mail from over at the Bradleys because Mr. Bradley's mailbox was in the same place there, right next to his Dad's. Old man Bradley had several black families living there on his place; he had eight or ten families. He always had one black person who went and got the mail and cooked--a nigger person, a black. We called them niggers then. This black person, George Hershel was his name, would go get the mail. He'd pick ours up at the same time and take it to the house. He always cooked and everything around the house. That's all he did. Old man Bradley had a pretty big store, and he worked around that and the gin and the gristmill.

M: They were all right there together?

H: There were about fifty yards between that store and the gin. George Hershel was a gardener for him and a good one. He was real'y good, could do anything, and he was polite.

M: I meant to ask you if you can remember a Concob Church?

H: That's funny. You know, there are two ConcoBs. The black people called it Concob, but it is really Concord. On the corner of our place, my granddaddy gave them an acre of land for a school and for what they call a "benevolent society hall" and a cemetery. That was the new Concob. The old Concob was over a mile and a half west of there. The new Concord. . . . There were so many black people around in that community at the time that they just built them a church on the corner of my granddad's place, my daddy's place.

M: Is that old building still standing there?

H: No, no. They moved that church, later on, down to the Payne Field/Barton Ferry Road. You know, where Hanging Kettle Creek is. It is just before you go down the hill there. That church is sitting up there on the corner.

M: That's been moved once?

H: That's been moved.

M: And that is the original building?

H: They tore that building down and used the lumber to build the new church house.

M: How did it get its name?

H: Don't know. They all say Concob. They don't say Concord; they say Concob.

M: I've got to admit that I never know what to call it. (laughter)

H: (laughter) That's what they call it, Concob.

M: Do you know who founded that church?

H: Don't have any idea. The oldest. . . . The black preacher that I knew out there was called Franklin. Believe it or not, he was a good preacher. Of course, he was one of these emotional kind of preachers. Over at the old Concord was a Tobe Colbert who was a preacher over there. They were both good preachers.

M: Did you go to the church services?

H: I've been over there many times. Believe it or not, when I was coming along, black people would come to Bethel Church. They had a

place there, that was reserved in back there for them. They'd drive the people to church in wagons and buggies and surreys. When they did, they brought them into church. You wouldn't think that'd happen in the South, but it did. (laughter) That's the truth.

M: Does the name Witherspoon mean anything to you?

H: Witherspoon is black. They came from down in the Waverly community. I was looking for a camphouse out there on the river. Of course, I had a fifth of liquor with me and was going to go out there and eat supper and have a time. This old Witherspoon man lived in this little house up on the side of the hill there, on that road going down to where they hauled gravel from. I can't think of his first name to save my life. I asked him where this camp was. He told me, and I said, "Would you like to have a drink." And yes sir, he'd like to have a drink. I had about a five ounce cup, and I poured him a good one. He was the happiest thing you ever saw. (laughter) He told me where to go, how to find the place.

M: One other name that I wanted to ask you about is Whaley Hill?

H: Hill. . . .

M: That's too far back?

H: That don't come back.

M: Well, I'd sure like to thank you for this interview. I've had a good time here.

H: (laughter) I've enjoyed it, too.

M: I hope you'll let me come back sometime.

H: Anytime, anytime, just call me.

M: Thanks a lot.

M: This is an interview with Mr. George Howard for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. The interview is taking place in Mr. Howard's home. His address is P.O. Box 193, West Point, Mississippi 39773. The date is June 6, 1980. Mr. Howard's telephone number is 494-4850.

Mr. Howard, we've been at this for awhile and you've told me a lot of stories, but you haven't told me anything about the Civil War in this area.

H: Most of all my knowledge of the Civil War is from my grandmother's telling us about it, the days of old and what happened and what a time they had in the South.

M: Now, is that your grandmother from near Abbott?

H: That's right, she was originally from Abbott. She was born in 1836 and moved to the eastern side of Clay County. At the end of the war, my grandmother and granddad owned thirteen slaves, I think it was. Several bales of cotton were destroyed during the War, and there was never any accounting for them.

M: Who destroyed them?

H: The northern people, the army; I guess it was the army. A lot of times they had as much trouble with the Confederate defectors as they did with the army. On my mother's side, her grandparents lost a lot of cotton, 102 bales of cotton.

M: Was that around here?

H: No, that was in Alabama where she was raised, not in this country. I heard my grandmother say how many bales of cotton were destroyed. I've never heard her say that they accounted for the cotton but it wouldn't have made a difference, it was destroyed. They had a pretty rough time.

M: Was your grandmother who told you about the lesser number of bales being destroyed living at Vinton when that happened?

H: They were living where I was born.

M: Up by the Monroe County line?

H: That's right.

M: Did she ever tell you what soldiers came through there?

H: She never did mention it. I don't think it was a big army of soldiers, but it was probably platoons, platoons or smaller bunches of soldiers.

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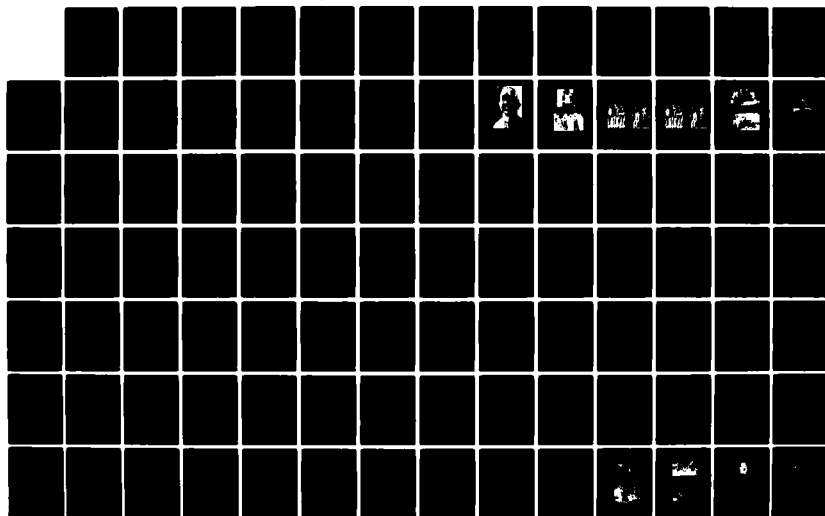
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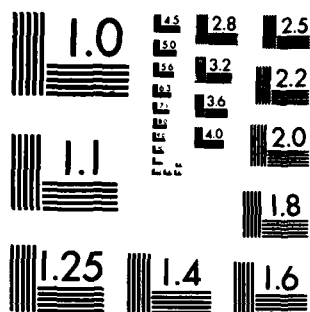
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That's what I gathered. I couldn't verify that only by her conversation.

M: Do you recall ever hearing about some kind of a battle that took place in a field by Schrock's store?

H: I heard my grandmother talk about a battle there. I think it was to the northwest of that store. I just barely remember her mentioning a battle being fought in that area. That's where the soldiers from the north destroyed the cotton or whatever they had, you know, and did a lot of destruction. Naturally, soldiers would do it, you know.

M: Did you ever hear of anyone being killed at that time?

H: No, I don't remember. Now up at Okalona there are a good many Confederate soldiers buried. In Columbus, there are a number of soldiers buried there. I don't know whether there are any Confederate soldiers. I believe there are some in the old cemetery that they moved from out where the West Point High School is now, and they moved that cemetery to Greenwood Cemetery. I think there were a few. I don't know how many were buried in that cemetery. I don't know who they were or any of their family.

M: Did your grandmother ever come in contact with the soldiers herself?

H: I never heard her say that they did. What they could hide, the cattle or the horses or the mules, they took them off into the swamps or someplace where they could hide them.

M: I've heard stories about people burying their gold. Are there a lot of stories about people out in Vinton who had done that?

H: I've heard my grandmother talking about the people in the community burying their gold or money. I don't know if they did. I don't know whether they had that much money or not, but of course, they dealt in gold then back in those days. I've heard Grandmother talk about using gold instead of silver.

M: Did she ever mention anybody who had done that?

H: No, not a specific person. She never said who, but I had an idea that the people like Mr. Bradley and the Edens, especially Mr. Jep Edens, did. They call him Jep Edens. He lived up in the community just east of Strongs. I don't know that Mr. Bradley did.

M: Why do you think that Mr. Edens did it?

H: I've heard my dad say that he buried his gold. That's as far as I know. My dad and the Edens were good friends who had known each other all of their lives. I heard him say that Mr. Jep, as we call him, had buried his gold or his money. I imagine that was gold, too. Brantley, his brother, was pretty well fixed, and just for a

guess, he might have buried his. He was kind of a prosperous farmer, you know, and a member of the state legislature in later life, middle life. He was a good man.

M: During Reconstruction things changed around here pretty drastically, didn't they?

H: Oh, yes, it did. It was a drastic change. The main thing was that it changed from slavery to non-slavery. Now, my granddad and my grandmother told their slaves that slavery was over with and they could go where they wanted to, do what they wanted to do, but all of them stayed with my grandparents, and of course, they carried the Howard name. I think there is only one who is living now. He lives in the Whites Station community and his name is Wonderful Howard. He is a direct descendant of the Howard's slaves. The Thomases, their older set, were direct descendants of the Howard's slaves.

M: Do you remember the original Howard slaves?

H: There was one named Will Howard and another one, I think, named Will Burrow, and I can't think of the other one. I can remember those very well. Old man Will Howard was a good old colored man. He raised a big family, but of course, they all went north in my day.

M: What year do you think the exodus of black families began?

H: Well, just for a guess, it must have been around 1890 or 1895 and in the 1900s.

M: Why did they start leaving?

H: Well, back then the only thing that the people and the farmers of the South had to make any money out of was cotton. Of course, they had to raise the corn and such as that for the foodstuffs. At that time, they paid three cents a pound for cotton. Well, there was no way you could take care of a good many sharecroppers. You get half, a cent-and-a-half for the cotton or whatever they charged. I don't remember, but I think at the time they got a fourth of the cotton and a half of the corn for sharecropping. It was impossible to keep the black families' family when they all had big families on a cent-and-a-half cotton or cent-and-three-quarter cotton. You just couldn't do it. They started moving north to the industrialized part of the country, the northeast, generally north at that time. But there was no way you could. . . .

I've heard my dad talking about that's what broke him up. He owned his property and he leased a lot of land in that neighborhood. Well, he couldn't feed those black people, and he just went broke, that's all. I remember that in my young days, up until I was a teenager, that the ones who worked for my dad, on his place or his leased property, had to make a garden and something to eat as well as cotton. If they didn't, they were just in bad shape. My dad and mother and all raised the corn, and we always had good gardens. My

dad always made his hands on the place make a garden. They had to have cows to have milk and butter. But they couldn't stay around if they didn't make a garden and raise their corn to feed themselves and feed their hogs. Of course, they never raised enough hogs for their meat. Pork was the main meat because you could cure it. You couldn't cure beef, like you could pork. It was pretty drastic, bound to have been, and confusing I imagine to the old people back then.

M: It's confusing even today to understand the economics of it.

H: That's exactly right. We can't conceive of going through a period like that. I think we are heading into a depression now and that's what bothers me. I went through one when I was a teenager, a young man. These youngsters now don't know what a depression is. They don't know how to eat corn bread, peas, fatback, and such as that. We did and a lot of people did.

M: When did the boll weevil come?

H: 1916 was the most destructive year, I think, that the boll weevils did this country.

M: Did that cause an exodus from the country, too?

H: Oh, yes, because the people just absolutely made no cotton. In 1916 my dad and Mr. Duke were working a lot of land over on the Tombigbee known as the Cogsdell place. They had a lot of cotton, I reckon thirty acres or forty acres. I don't know how much; I don't remember. They made nothing out of that thirty or forty acres of cotton. They made probably three bales of cotton. You know that's pretty bad.

M: That's enough to drive a man under right there.

H: Oh, absolutely it was! Then if you didn't raise what you ate, you were in bad shape in this country. A lot of people don't know that they went through that, but I do. I know what kind of times they had. We always had plenty to eat, but of course, the clothes were patched, you know. We were healthy and had plenty of food, no money.

M: Did you have two suits of clothes?

H: No! No way.

M: No. What kind of clothes did you wear when you were a kid?

H: When I was a teenager and all from ten and twelve on up until I was twenty years old, I wore overalls and jumpers. That was our wear everyday. Of course, we had Sunday clothes and Sunday shoes.

M: What were your Sunday clothes?

H: They were the better tailored stuff, I guess.

M: The better tailored overalls?

H: Well, it looked better you know; you could dress up in it, kind of. I have seen my dad wear what he called his Sunday clothes. He always wore white linen trousers. What brings that back to me is that they'd never button the top button. They all wore those suspenders and they never buttoned that top button on those classy-looking, white, pure linen trousers. I don't know why. That was just the fashion. They never buttoned that top button. It just flared open a little bit, you know.

M: Did he wear a straw hat, too?

H: They had staw hats, yeah. For a long time they had this old . . . not a Panama hat but a regular old straw hat, a square hat with a flat top. That was the go back in the days when I was a teenager.

M: What about when you were younger? Can you remember that?

H: Well, yes, they had this old flat-top straw hat then. I only owned but one flat-top straw hat. You've seen these politicians and all wear those hats?

M: Yes.

H: I owned one in my life; I never bought another one. The next one I bought was a Panama hat.

M: What did the women wear?

H: Oh, back in those days they wore bonnets. Of course, they had little old different kinds of hats and all like that, but all of the ladies back then wore bonnets everyday.

M: How come?

H: It just was a fashion, a fad. You just now and then see a bonnet in the country now. There's a person at Montpelier who makes those bonnets. My wife was wanting her to make her one not long ago. It had a beek on it and they'd sew that back. They made it just like a cap bill, you know. It extended out over their face. They'd gather in the back of their hair, and it flopped down over the ears, you know.

M: Did they have a name for that kind of bonnet?

H: Yes, it was just a bonnet. That's all they called it.

M: What kind of dresses did they wear when they were busy around the house?

H: Mother Hubbards.

M: What's a Mother Hubbard? (laughter)

H: (laughter) You've never heard of a Mother Hubbard?

M: I think you have to tell me.

H: A dress that covers everything and touches nothing, big, you know. Of course, when they went to visiting or church or to gathering like that, they'd put on their Sunday-go-to-meeting stuff.

M: What color was their Sunday-go-to-meeting dress?

H: Well, they really had nice clothing for occasions like that. My mother was a good seamstress, and she could do anything with a sewing machine. She made all of our shirts and underwear, everything.

M: Did your grandmother have a sewing machine?

H: Yes, she had a sewing machine in her time. After my dad married my mother, my grandmother turned the sewing over to my mother. She did all the sewing and sewed for the neighborhood.

M: Did she make extra money that way?

H: Did it for nothing, just because it was neighborly.

M: Did many people have sewing machines?

H: Not too many.

M: So it was sort of the tailor shop?

H: It was. Mrs. Bradley had a machine and my mother had a machine and I believe Mrs. Early Duke had one. They are the ones I knew about, but every family didn't have a machine.

M: So they just tried to help each other out there?

H: Absolutely! You were neighbors.

M: Oh, I see. I wanted to ask you about Lucy Natural.¹ We talked about her house a little bit, and I was wondering if you could describe to me what her yard was like?

H: I remember the house; it was a very nice house. The porch had these columns across the front of the house. This house was a kind of a longlike house, but it wasn't a two-story building. The rooms and all were on the first floor, but from the front it was very nice

¹Also spelled Natcher, Nacher, Natchez, and Natchell.

looking, real nice. Now the yard, she had flowers of all kinds that she worked all time, always had beautiful flowers.

M: Did she have any brick walks in her yard?

H: I don't remember; I remember she had around some of her flowers, bricks to make flower beds to protect it. Now, I think from her front gate to the porch was a brick walk.

M: You said gate. Did she have a fence around it?

H: Had a fence around the house.

M: Oh, what kind of fence?

H: It was a picket fence and that wasn't higher than what they call a paling fence. The picket fence was about four feet high and the paling was about six feet high. She had a picket fence around her house and the barn where she kept her buggy. All of that was out to the east of the house.

M: I see. Did she have a well there?

H: Had a well.

M: What kind of a well was it?

H: I don't remember that. I know she had a well. She didn't have a pump; it was a dug well. At my old home where I was raised there was a dug well. It was twenty-eight feet deep.

M: Was it lined?

H: We bricked it in. The bottom of this well went into the blue rock. There were three streams of water coming into that well from three different angles, and it was just as cold as ice, nearly.

M: When you dug the well, how did you put the brick in when there was water in the bottom?

H: Well, the water in that well came up to about twelve or fifteen feet from the top of the ground. It never came higher; that's as high as it would come. When they dug the well, they put 8"x 12" timbers at the bottom of the four sides of that well. They started with a square and finally got it where they could round it out with the brick. They never used any concrete or mortar in that. My dad just used brick and they finally got to where the top was round.

M: Did you go all the way down to the blue rock?

H: Down to the rock, down to the rock, down to the rock. They put these 8"x 12" pieces of hewn lumber down to start the brick on, to hold those bricks. I guess they are still in there right now.

- M: I was wondering how you would manage to lay the bricks with the water in the bottom.
- H: Well, see they started in a square, and as it come up they made a circle out of it.
- M: What happened to that well after you stop using it?
- H: After I left home, my dad bought another place to the east of there. When I got back out of the army, I went out there. I was tax assessor at the time. I thought well, I'll go out to see if I can find the old well. I rambled around and found an old mulberry tree that was in the yard. It was a monstrous thing. I found that mulberry tree and I knew the direction of that well. I went there and found this well. They had dug into it to see what was in there. I don't know why. Mr. A. C. Sanders out here was one in the bunch that dug into that well. I don't know why they did it. I didn't ask him why. I should have, I guess. I found that old well and just over behind that well, I heard some noise, something like a low bark. There were two red foxes and I shot them both, killed them both. Now they are worth a hundred dollars each.
- M: Speaking of Mr. A. C. Sanders, have you ever heard of a store and gristmill somewhere around where his house is?
- H: I don't know where it was, but there was one in there. I don't know where. I believe that Mr. Wilson had a gristmill, and there was a gin in that neighborhood somewhere. I don't know where that was. I'm kind of thinking Mr. Wilson was. . . . There was a Zack, Trannie, Tobe, and all those, and it was their daddy who had something to do with that gin and the gristmill. I don't know where it was located at. It might have been around in that neighborhood.
- M: I see. At one time, did the Vinton Road have a big curve right by the schoolhouse and then go around the western boundary of A. C. Sanders's place?
- H: Yes. (finds a map) The school building was right here, we'll say. That road ran east and west, north of the schoolhouse, came right around the house, went down over the hill, and turned north.
- M: Where did the Dry Creek Road cut off that?
- H: The Dry Creek Road didn't touch this. From where this road turned north, over the hill from the schoolhouse here, just west of A. C. Sanders's west line, that road went right up that section line up there. It's three-quarters-of-a-mile over here to this Dry Creek and around on up through here.
- M: Where would George Gladney's house be?
- H: George Gladney's house would be west just another three-quarters-of-a-mile.

M: I see. The Dry Creek Road that we know now was actually continued off the old Vinton Road?

H: That's right; that's exactly right.

M: I see.

H: They changed the Vinton Road.

M: What they did was just cut off the angles and ran it straight.

H: That's exactly right and there is ninety-six acres in this section of land.

M: That's the land that A. C. Sanders owns?

H: That's it, and my dad used to lease over there.

M: That road comes out by the old Clay house?

H: Old Ned Gibson's house is on up here north from A. C. Sanders's, three-quarters-and-a-mile north of that. The Ned Gibson place started right at the northern point of the A. C. Sanders's land.

M: When you were a kid you used to go to school at. . . ?

H: I went to Vinton School and I remember that it had a path up through north here and it went across this pond on the west side of the present Vinton Road. We thought that was the largest pond in the world.

M: What did you do at the pond?

H: We'd always walk along the dam of that pond. They had some of these wild ducks in it.

M: You didn't go swimming in the pond, did you?

H: Oh, no, no, no. We went over to Dry Creek; we went swimming there a lot of times. We had special swimming places there.

M: The Dry Creek?

H: Oh, yeah. I had one place as large as this house.

M: How deep was the water then?

H: Not over six feet at the north end of it.

M: Was the water cold?

H: Cold as ice. (laughter)

M: When you went to school at Vinton, what was the typical school day like?

H: Well, we got there at eight o'clock. The school bell rang and all of the kids went into the school. We had about a fifteen minute recess, and when that was over, we went back until twelve o'clock or quarter-past three.

M: Did you have a clock in that place?

H: The teacher had the clock and the bell.

M: What kind of clock did she have?

H: She had one of those Ingersols or. . . . It's very common now. I can't think of the name of it right now, but anyway, it was an alarm clock.

M: Did everybody have a clock in their house?

H: Oh, yes. Everybody had to have an alarm clock. Now, my grandmother had one of these pendulum clocks, the kind you call. . . . I had one in there. It was an old eight-day clock. You would wind it every eight days. What became of it, I don't know.

M: So what did you do at recess time?

H: At recess time, we had one of the big games. We played ball, what we called baseball, townball or something. They just had a ball and each fellow would go to the bat at a certain time. Then they had a game that they played where you'd have a base and if you could run around anybody, you'd run around and they'd come over on your side, just something to take up your time, frolic around, you know.

M: Did you ever get into any mischief?

H: Not much! If you did, you didn't get into it the second time.

M: (laughter) Why not?

H: When they told you not to do something, you didn't do it; you might do it one time but that was it.

M: Did they enforce their words?

H: Did they enforce them! You can believe they did.

M: How did they do it?

H: Well, the worst thing you could do was to get a whipping. The next thing was to stand up on the stage in that schoolhouse. We had a stage all the way across the front, and of course, we had a curtain and a blackboard up there. They'd make you stand up there for

fifteen or twenty minutes, for something you've done wrong. If you got too bad, they made you stand there with your nose in a ring. I never did that because if we did that, we got a whipping when we went home.

M: What kind of a ring was it?

H: They'd just draw a circle about as big around as the top of that glass there, and you stood there with your nose in it. (laughter)

M: A tailor-made ring just special for your height, huh?

H: That's right.

M: You had two brothers didn't you?

H: Two brothers and one sister.

M: What were your brother's names?

H: The oldest one is Nathaniel Kolb Howard and the young one is Van Alphonso Mordeci Howard.

M: Where did Van live?

H: He lived at Starkville until his death.

M: Did he ever live out in a house in Vinton?

H: Well, he lived with my dad and mother, of course, until they moved. Well, he went to the C. C. Camp there, but he never owned a house out there.

M: Did your parents ever live in the Brooks house?

H: No.

M: How about the Ned Gibson house?

H: Ned Gibson, yes.

M: They did live in the Ned Gibson house?

H: My dad bought that place.

M: So when you moved out of your house that your grandparents lived in you moved into the Ned Gibson house?

H: That's right; that's it.

M: Did you ever live in a house out there that was known as the old stagecoach inn?

H: No.

M: You never lived in a house across the road from where Mary Booker lives?

H: No.

M: Okay.

H: My grandmother lived right in that same house until her death. We moved to Florida in 1913, I believe, and my grandmother was so shook up over it and all that we moved back to the old homeplace.

M: Why did you move to Florida?

H: Well, my dad and my mother all wanted to move there. My grandmother was against it, but she would go with us if we went. So we moved to Fort Mead, Florida, Wauchula first and back up to Fort Mead. My grandmother just couldn't take it so my dad said, "Well, we'll just go back home." We came back home.

M: Is that when you moved into the Gibson house?

H: No, it must have been 1919 when he bought that place, probably 1920 because I had been working in a sawmill and I got tired of that. I quit and went to high school down at Pheba.

M: You mentioned that there is a man named Joe Berry. Is he still alive?

H: No, he died less than a year ago, I think.

M: I see. Would he have been J. D. Berry?

H: Joseph D. Berry, yes.

M: You also mentioned that there were some Montgomerys who lived up near Lebanon.

H: That's right.

M: Who were they?

H: His name was Lewis Montgomery and his son lives out on Lone Oak Drive.

M: Is he any relation to Peter Montgomery?

H: I don't know Peter. Oh, Peter Montgomery is black.

M: Is this other Montgomery a white man?

H: White.

M: Did they live in the area quite some while?

- H: He married a Thraikill and he originally came from Starkville. He had a brother who taught mechanical engineering at State College. He was really what you call a metal worker and used metal and such as that, shop work. He was an artist at it. I learned that after about 1930. I found out who he was and it was this fellow's brother. Now his uncle is also a craftsman like that.
- M: Are there any Montgomerys who were an old family out by Vinton who would have kept slaves, that the black people took their name from?
- H: I don't know of any. Now, there were some black people named Lloyd. I don't know where the original name came from but I have an idea that the Lloyds here in West Point are an old family. They used to own a farm out on this Payne Field Road/Barton Ferry Road, just on the west side of Hanging Kettle Creek. My dad knew them and I think that the Lloyd black people got their name from his people. I believe that's right.
- M: I see. Do you know a man named Jeff Oates?
- H: Jeff Oates was black.
- M: Where did he live?
- H: Jeff Oates lived in the Waverly community.
- M: How about Pattersons?
- H: I don't know the Pattersons.
- M: How about Freemans?
- H: Oh, yes.
- M: Who were they?
- H: They were good friends of mine. They were Duck Freeman and his two sisters and his mother. She was a sister to Mr. Zack Ellis, and they bought a place right across from the old Zack Ellis home. Duck Freeman was a good friend of mine. He had a sister, Mrs. Johnson, and they raised five children, three girls and two boys. Three of those girls work in the First National Bank here. Duck married a Shepherd here. They went from here to Louisiana, and some fellow killed him.
- M: When did they come to Vinton?
- H: In about 1918.
- M: So they weren't one of the real early families?
- H: Not the real early ones. They originally came from over in Caledonia.
- M: How about the Shinns?

H: The Shinns were an old family and the Shinn place is. . . . You've been from West Point out here to where Homer Tumlinson lives. As you go down that hill on the Barton Ferry Road there going to his house, there is a rock road that turns to the right there. As you go up on top of the hill on the gravel road, just before you top that hill, that was the old Shinn's place.

M: Did you ever have much association with those people or were they too far away?

H: We knew them. A Cox bought the Shinn's place. There was Mack Cox, and he had about four boys. The youngest one went to someplace over in Georgia. Mack is still living here in town and the one who is in Starkville ran a cleaning business. He's dead. I don't know where the other one is. He's probably dead.

M: How about the Funderburkes?

H: Funderburkes. Have you been to the old Waverly Mansion down there? When you go down the hill just before you get up to go up to the old mansion, there used to be a beautiful home up on top of that hill there, a beautiful place. That was the Funderburke home.

M: So it was down by Waverly?

H: Waverly, that's right.

M: How far north of Waverly would that be?

H: Well, about a mile. It was just west of the Waverly Mansion. I think that place was joined by the old Young place.

M: Was it a real large farm?

H: I don't know what the acreage was, but it was not a large acreage, though.

M: Were they relatively wealthy people?

H: Apparently. He ran for supervisor once against Zack Ellis. He never made it. Now, he had a brother. They originally came from Starkville, over into that area.

M: So they weren't there for a long time?

H: For a long time, no. It's a lot longer than I can remember, but now, they were of German descent. He had a brother who was a master woodworker and he made furniture. So did old man Funderburke. I didn't know his brother but he worked and made furniture of all kinds and was an artist at it.

M: Did they have a little shop there?

H: Yes, he had a shop back there, but he worked with some furniture company. I don't know where it was. I want to say it was in Mobile but I'm not positive about it. When they left Clay County, I think they went back to Mobile.

M: Was there one of them named Miller Funderburke?

H: No, I don't think so. Well, he had this brother whose initials were F. E. Funderburke. His brother had kind of a Spanish name and it won't come back to me.

M: How about G. W. Vaughn?

H: Vaughn, I don't know that.

M: Did you ever hear any stories about stagecoaches?

H: Oh, yes.

M: We haven't talked about those at all.

H: Old man Barnett up at Darracott had a kind of a motel or hotel at the time, and that's where the stagecoaches coming from Aberdeen coming down and going to Columbus would stop. I guess they got food and probably sometimes spent the night there.

M: Was there ever a place in Vinton?

H: I haven't ever heard if there was. Apparently when they left Darracott, they went all the way into Columbus. Of course, they crossed the river at Barton Ferry or Waverly, one or the other, but they changed their teams up at Barnett's place. That goes a long-ways back.

H: Had your dad ever spoken of an old stagecoach stop either at Barton where they crossed the ferry or at Vinton?

H: Well, I don't know, but my dad spoke of the coaches going from down that old Aberdeen/Columbus Road, which was that road by A. C. Sanders's house, in his younger days. Of course, down at Trotter's store—Trotter owned the Vinton store at the time and then the Watsons—it would stop over there.

M: We haven't talked very much about Mr. Watson either. Did he own that land as early as you knew?

H: Yes, he owned it at that time, but prior to that time a man named Trotter owned it.

M: Where did Mr. Trotter live?

H: I think and I believe that it was really. . . . There was a house across the road over there from that store, and it burned. That was

where Mr. Trotter lived. I think now that when the Watsons bought this place--I understand that my dad was working down there at the time Mr. Watson bought this place--that building had burned. Now, the Trotters moved to West Point. One of the members of the family got to be sheriff for the county, Dick Trotter. He and my daddy were real good friends and that was where they knew each other from, down at the Trotter store or the Watson store.

M: Did your dad ever tell you about the house that Mr. Trotter lived in? What it looked like?

H: The only thing that I ever remembered him saying is about the house being over there somewhere and that it burned . . . and that this fellow Trotter. . . . And I think it burned about the time Mr. Watson bought the place.

M: And when would that have been?

H: Oh, heck. It was way back there. It must have been in the early 1890s, or 1895 or something like that. That's a long time ago.

M: It sure is. Did Mr. Watson have sharecroppers who worked his holdings there?

H: Oh, yes. All of them had sharecroppers. Watson had a big acreage there. He had a lot of hands; no telling how many families he had living on his place. He was one of these guys that furnished this and that and the other for the year. He furnished his hands so much. They made a deal with him to furnish him so much, twenty-five or thirty or forty dollars worth. That was a lot of money then. Then in that fall, when they gathered the crops and the cotton, they would go out and pay it out.

M: Where would his sharecroppers have lived on the place?

H: Everywhere. They'd have a cabin here and another one three or four hundred yards.

M: Were they along the old Vinton Road?

H: They were back on west of Dry Creek and where the north of Zack Ellis's farm was. That was where the cabins were. You know, right in the corner where old Will Shirley's place is now and on there, well, that was one and right up the road there were two.

M: Was that on the same side of the road?

H: The same side of the road that Shirley was on, and Will Shirley's place was on the corner.

M: Do you know any of the people who lived in those two sharecroppers cabins?

- H: I didn't know them, but over there where Duck Freeman and his mother and two sisters lived now, there were some cabins north of that plumb up to the Schrock place.
- M: Did they have a special name for that little community that those places formed?
- H: No, that was just in the Vinton community; that's about all. Of course, the black people there had their cabins which were generally two rooms together and a shed room back behind. And a lot of them were small families where they just had two or three children. They didn't ever have over three rooms, seldom ever.
- M: Were there any sharecroppers' cabins on the east side of the Vinton Road?
- H: No, I don't think so. They were down below the Schrock place, and between there and the Zack Ellis place is where those cabins were. There used to be a road that ran down from the Schrock place on down to the Ellis place. There were several cabins back down through there, and that was on the west side of the Watson place.
- M: There was a community that sort of sprung up around Concob Church. Were they sharecroppers for somebody?
- H: There were two Concobs. The black people call it Concob but it was Concord. The new Concord was on the corner . . . my grandparents gave them two acres of land on the southwest corner of the place and they built a church, a Benevolent Hall they called it. It was a two-story building and it was a good-size building. They had a church and they taught school downstairs in this Benevolent Hall. They had a Benevolent Society upstairs. They had the church joining it on the north side. They had the cemetery and the old cemetery is still there now.
- M: When did they build this building?
- H: Oh, before I was born.
- M: Would it have been in the last century?
- H: It would have been in the last century, yes. The old Concord is farther west, about a-mile-and-three-quarters west of that. It's still up there.
- M: When people say "the Concob community," do they talk about the two places as being all one community?
- H: No, I don't think so. When they built this on my grandmother and dad's place, they always called that "Corn;" I never knew why. West of that there were a lot of black people living in that community and there still are a few. Have you ever been up to old Concord? There used to be a lot more cabins up that road, going up to that

church, than there are now. They were just thick. Every few yards was a house and a home. Some were very nice homes. Of course, they deteriorated and burned up and all this, that and the other, and they are gone. As you go on toward the northwest you got off onto the Dukeminier property. Sid Dukeminier and them had a world of black people. Over there were the Mortons especially in old Concob, Silas Morton, Frank Morton, and all of that, Lancaster and all lived in there around that church, but there weren't as many who lived around this church that my grandparents gave them the land to build on. Well, there were a good many of black people there. They were sharecroppers on my dad's land. They were the Thomases and the Mortons, Sam Morton, Silas Morton, Frank Morton, Jr., and the Howards. Just a number of black people lived in there.

M: I see. What determined the boundaries of those communities?

H: I guess the boundary would be Hanging Kettle Creek.

M: That separated old Concob from the new one?

H: I think that's what they determined.

M: Could you describe the Zack Ellis store for me?

H: He didn't have much of a store. South of the West Point/Barton Ferry Road, he owned that place. I don't know what acreage he had, but he must have owned around two hundred acres. He had several families on his place, on both sides of Dry Creek. He just had a small store that he furnished his hands with, you know, and anybody else in the neighborhood who wanted to buy something, but he didn't cater to that business much.

M: Was that store there as long as you could remember?

H: I don't know what year, but I remember the first time he ran for supervisor. He had a small store at the time, but he was mainly interested in supervisory politics. He was a good old gentleman.

M: In the 1890s, either 1892 or 1897, the West Point Leader, said that your grandfather was asked to become an inspector for the United States Government. Would you know anything about that at all?

H: I never knew what he inspected. I've heard my dad say that he was an inspector but I never knew what he inspected.

M: He was an inspector of some kind?

H: He was some kind but I never knew what.

M: He wasn't an inspector of stills was he?

H: (laughter) He was a pretty good drinker; he liked to drink. He was supervisor here for, I think, twelve or sixteen years.

M: Maybe he inspected roads?

H: Well, probably so. I don't know, but back then each man had to work three days on the roads to be able to vote. If you didn't work for three days on the roads, you couldn't vote. That was how strict they were.

M: Who kept track of all of that to make sure they did?

H: The board of supervisors, the circuit clerk, the chancery clerk, they kept the records. I've ran across in the supervisor's minutes where this one did so many days work on the road, in their old minutes on that, on their docket. That goes way back there a long time ago.

M: What kind of work did they do on the roads?

H: Well, they didn't have good roads then, I'm sure, but where there was a bad place or low place in the road, they'd fill it in or fix up so it would drain under there. The way they drained it was by putting poles down and making a kind of a . . . They didn't have too much lumber in those days, you know. They couldn't afford to buy it, so they took trees, cut them down, and fixed them in a way that that water would go under them like a culvert. They had shovels, spades, and picks to fill those low places and bad ruts. That's the way they got away. Their roads were terrible, bound to have been.

M: Have you ever been to the Ben Bradley store?

H: Many a time.

M: What was the store like?

H: It was a good-sized store. I guess that store was thirty or thirty-five feet long probably, and it had a shed to the back, what we called a shed. Back there he kept pine tars and vinegar and such stuff as that. He had a door there back off of this shed and he made cider there. He had a lot of fruit trees, apples. He would make apple cider, kept his cider press back there and most anything that a person wanted. Of course, now it would be obsolete.

M: Did he have a great many customers or did people still go to West Point?

H: He had quite a bit. He had a lot of families on his place. He and Bob Bradley were brothers. He owned the property that Mrs. Duke now owns. Old man Ben had a good many hands, and of course, he furnished them. He had quite a store.

M: Did he ever live in that store building?

H: Yes, in later years he did. His home burned; he had a nice home. The last time I saw the old gentleman, I was up there and he was living in that store.

M: I wanted to ask you a little bit about land taxes. When tax was levied how long did somebody have to get those taxes paid before their land was taken?

H: You assess the taxes in the summer and they are due as of December 1. The tax rolls are open to be paid and you'd have until February 1 to pay those taxes. If they're not paid by the first Tuesday of April, they sell it for taxes. If nobody buys it, it goes to the state. The owners have two years to redeem their land. If you bought in a piece of property and a person didn't pay it for two years, the chancery clerk had to warn this person that his place, if it is not redeemed, will mature in the name of the person that bought the property. The person who is buying this property should be very careful about it because that can be tricky. The titles have got to be good and if there is a flaw in the title, it has to be put into court and chancery court for the title to be cleared on it.

M: Has that always been handled in that way?

H: Yes.

M: Since the founding of the County?

H: That goes back into the 18th century, sometime way back.

M: So a person who is losing their land can actually live on that land for two years before it is taken?

H: That's right, exactly right and of course he has to be warned. That was one thing that I was very particular about because if a person had a lien on that property, say a thousand dollars, and I failed to warn him that property was fixing to mature. . . . I'd had to warn both of them, the one that owns the property and the one that bought it in for the taxes. If anybody had a lien on it, you have to warn them, and the only way you could warn them is by a registered letter with return receipt requested. I never failed to do it. If a person didn't warn a fellow who had loaned money on this property, say for five thousand dollars, so he could buy it in or take care of it and pay those taxes, then the clerk is responsible for that debt. That's dangerous.

M: The clerk personally?

H: Yes sir, absolutely. I had one member of my family who was chancery clerk and she had to pay four thousand dollars. That was back in the 1920s and that was a lot of money then.

M: You could buy a real nice house with that much money.

H: Well, absolutely.

M: I want to ask you about the fairs that they used to hold up in the Grange Hall by Lebanon.

H: I don't know whether that was an organization; I think it was an organization. Some person--I can't remember the name--used to have some very classy horses up there. I heard my dad talking about going up there in his younger days. They always had a sure enough big fair up there in that community.

M: You never got to go to them?

H: I never got to go to them; that passed on before I got to go.

M: I see.

H: There were two churches there at the time, a Presbyterian and a Christian church, one was on one side of the road and one was on the other, where that cemetery is now. Off to the left of the Presbyterian church is where they had this fair. I've heard my dad talk about a man who used to raise some racehorses up there in that community.

M: It wouldn't have been the Tatums would it?

H: I believe it was Tatum. There was a black man who lived on the place that my dad leased. He bought a horse up there in that community somewhere, probably this fellow. He might have raised this horse. When I was just a small kid, they had these races up in Aberdeen, harness races, and this nigra had two racehorses. He won the race nearly every year. One of the horses was named Cleo. Cleo was a very beautiful horse and a good one. I can't think of the other horse's name, but Sam Morton won a race nearly every year.

M: Where did they race?

H: In Aberdeen.

M: They had a racetrack there?

H: Yeah, they had a racetrack there, had a good racetrack, a beautiful racetrack with a big grandstand. They'd have the big fair there, at that time, and probably a circus. It was a big time then. This black man had a classy horse. Sam got in debt to Ben Bradley. Ben let him have money and took a lien on his horse. Well, Sam was ready to go to Gary, Indiana, so he borrowed the money from Mr. Bradley. When he didn't pay him, he left and went to Gary, Indiana. Mr. Bradley had to take the horse to get his money. He never did anything with the horse, turned it out to pasture and never did anything with it. He had all kinds of mules and horses and everything. He didn't care anything about it.

M: Well, I've just about asked you all of the questions I have for today. I appreciate the time you have spent with me.

H: Well, I enjoyed it; I really enjoyed it. I probably refreshed my memory on a lot of that stuff that I would have let slip by.



Figure 3. George Howard in 1927. Photo courtesy of A. E. Wilson.



Figure 4. Rebecca Howard.



Figure 5. Students at the Vinton School. Front row, left to right: Unknown, Annie Laurie Duke, Unknown, Lillie Maude Duke, Unknown, George Howard. Back row, left to right: Unknown, Winford McGraw, Velma Duke, Unknown, Nat Howard. Photos courtesy of A. E. Wilson.



Figure 6. Students at the Vinton School. From left to right: Unknown, George Howard, Lillie Maude Duke.



Figure 7. Students at the Vinton School. From left to right: Nat Howard, Velma Duke, Ellen Howard. Photos courtesy of A. E. Wilson.



Figure 6. Students at the Vinton School. From left to right: Unknown, George Howard, Lillie Maude Duke.



Figure 7. Students at the Vinton School. From left to right: Nat Howard, Velma Duke, Ellen Howard. Photos courtesy of A. E. Wilson.



Figure 8. The Howard family. Front row, left to right: Van Jr., a Carmine child, Ellen, George, a Carmine child, Nat. Middle row, left to right: a Carmine child. Back row, left to right: Van Sr., Mattie, Rebecca, three Carmines.



Figure 9. Young people of the Vinton community. Front row, left to right: Nat Howard, Georgiana Mullen, Francie Bradford, Allen Cogsdell, George Howard, Derotha Mullen, Herbert Rhea. Back row, left to right: Unknown, Unknown, Pete Barkemeyer, Susie Howard, Aubury Mullen. In car: Ellen Howard. Photos courtesy of George Howard.

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 102
Interviews with
Irene Armstrong

conducted and edited by
Peggy Uland Anderson



Irene Armstrong was born in the Vinton community in 1911. She is a member of the Wilson family, one of the largest extended kin groups to have lived in the Vinton area. Her family has lived in many of the original Vinton and Barton structures. Mrs. Armstrong's memories of these houses, the people who lived in them, and the way of life associated with the structures are clear and detailed. They add greatly to the overall picture of the towns. Her accounts of family life focus our attention on the lifeways associated with the towns.

Interviews were conducted by Peggy U. Anderson with Mrs. Armstrong on December 12, 1979, January 23, 1980, and March 11, 1980. Her husband Elvey Armstrong, was present during the second session, and her son, Leroy Armstrong participated in the third.

U: This is an interview with Mrs. Irene Armstrong for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Peggy Uland on December 12, 1979 at Mrs. Armstrong's home which is on Route 1, Box 311, West Point, Mississippi 39773. Mrs. Armstrong's telephone number is 494-6570.

Mrs. Armstrong, would you tell me where and when you were born?

A: Well, I was born in the Vinton community on October 31, 1911.

U: Were you born at home?

A: Yes, I was born at home.

U: Where was your family house then?

A: This home right here (points to a painting on the wall) was in what you call Vinton. The schoolhouse stood for what I guess you'd call Vinton. My daddy donated an acre of land to the county to build the schoolhouse on, and that school stood there for many years. He donated it not long after he married and moved there. I don't know the year. He and my mother married in January 1901. And in the fall of 1901, they moved from Carroll County, Mississippi to Clay County, out in the Vinton community and built the house that I was born in. We lived there until I was about twelve years old, when we moved away from there.

U: What were your father's and mother's names?

A: Dennis Wilson and Mary Elizabeth Wilson. In the early years that we lived there, my mother was postmistress there. The mail came from Aberdeen; it didn't come out of West Point. It came by what they call the "star route." A Negro man drove a horse hitched to a sulky buggy and carried the mail. Of course, the post office was in our house, so the people in the community came to the house and picked up the mail. The mail just came three days a week. He would wait there about an hour or hour and a half to pick up any mail that anybody had. Knowing the days that the mail was coming and about what time he would get there, they would come and get their mail and bring mail to send off if they had any.

Back in that time all the fences they had were around the crops. All the open land was in pasture, and cattle and any kind of stock ran loose. You had to have fences around your crops.

U: What crops did people usually put in?

A: Corn and cotton.

U: Is that what your dad did?

A: Yes, and he raised cattle, too. He was a horse trader; he bought

horses. He'd go out and buy a horse for just a little or nothing. Then he'd come in and mix him up some of what they call mule "sweet feed"--horse sweet feed--and blackstrap molasses. He'd put a box of soda in there and stir it all up together. In a month's time, he would have that horse so slick and fat that most of the time he'd make anywhere from seventy-five to a hundred dollars on a horse deal. It doesn't sound like it's much to make on a deal now, but in those days that was big money. He made a lot more that way than he did out of his crops.

U: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: I had two brothers. I had one brother older than I was and one younger than I was. My older brother is dead; he's been dead twelve years. My younger brother is still living. He lives on Lone Oak Drive between here and West Point.

U: What's his name?

A: Frank Wilson.

U: Did they live out there, too? Are you all close in age?

A: No, there's six years difference in mine and my youngest brother's age. When we moved away from our old homeplace, Frank was, I guess, about three years old. Then we moved about two miles down to another house and lived there a year. Then we moved to Eupora and stayed twelve years there, and then we moved back to Clay County--on up above Siloam at the little community called Abbott. That is where I met and married Elvey Armstrong.

U: Did you live out there for a long time after you were married?

A: We lived there three years, and then we moved to Pheba and stayed three years. Then we moved back to West Point and lived a year southeast of town, right out at the edge of town. Then we moved back to this community, not far from here over on what's called a "government project" place. We stayed there three years, and then we moved from there to Crawford, Mississippi and stayed a year. Then we moved to Starkville and we stayed there two years and then moved back to Abbott where we stayed nine years in one place. Then we moved to this house and we've been here nineteen years.

U: So, you've moved a lot in your time.

A: Yes, moved about quite a bit.

U: You said your father moved to the Vinton community. Where was his family from?

A: His family moved around quite a bit, too. They were originally from North or South Carolina--I don't remember which one of the Carolinas. One time they moved to Texas in an ox wagon. My son Norman--the one

that you told me that you met over at Blazon--he has an antique table that belonged to my Grandmother Wilson. She was a Westbrook before she married. This table is so old that it was put together with wooden pegs instead of nails, but it still has a nice finish on it.

U: Did they have that in their house when they lived out in Vinton?

A: Yes, well, my mother and daddy, I guess, must have gotten it either when my grandmother died, which was before I was born, or when my granddaddy broke up housekeeping. My grandfather also died before I was born, but my grandmother died first. My parents had that table all the time that I can remember until after my son married. He kind of claimed all of the old antique dishes and everything that my mother had accumulated over the years. My youngest son has been all over the world, almost, working on barges and things, and he can't haul such as that around with him. So Norman has claimed most of the antique stuff which he has in his home in West Point. They own their home there; they can kind of, you know, sit still and keep it.

My daddy was a constable and deputy sheriff out in the Vinton community. There weren't too many white people that lived out there, but there were a lot of Negroes. They had some big farms--some were small farms--but there were several big plantations there. Each one of them had just lots of Negroes.

U: Were they sharecropping?

A: Uh-huh. Of course, there was always fighting and fussing among them, so he had a lot of work to do riding and settling disputes among the Negroes and all. He was always called on. Of course, in those days you had to ride horseback to go do all of that.

U: All dirt roads?

A: All dirt roads. We have a picture of the first rock road that was built in Clay County.

U: Is that out along what is the Barton's Ferry Road now?

A: Yes, it is what's called the Barton's Ferry Road. The pictures that I have were made somewhere in the vicinity of where the Bryan farm is now, where the Bryan feed mill and everything is located.

U: How did your family get those pictures?

A: Well, my daddy was a good friend to this engineer that was building the road. I don't have any idea who made the pictures, but, anyway, he got some of them.

U: What was the engineer's name?

A: Mr. Carey. C-A-R-E-Y was his last name. I don't know his first name.

U: Do you remember him ever visiting at your home?

A: No, because these roads were built before I was born. I was sixty-eight in October, so they're over sixty-eight years old.

U: Did you go to school in the Vinton community?

A: Yes, I did. That was a one-room school that taught through the eighth grade. My mother and father boarded the schoolteachers all the time that we lived out there--even after we moved from our old homeplace to this other place about two miles from there. The schoolteacher boarded with us and went to school in a horse and buggy--drove a horse and buggy to school. We went with her.

U: Do you remember any of the other kids who were in school when you were? Any of the other families from around here?

A: Yes, the Dukes and the Bradfords--the Bradfords didn't stay--the McNeils, the Kellers.

And by the way, when you were here before, y'all said something about the remains of an old house out there. Well, I talked to my brother about it, and he says he don't know nothing about it. But my husband has been out there hunting quite a few times and says that part of the old Uithoven house is still standing. It was an old log house, and the Uithovens are preserving part of it and have made a camphouse out of it. Unless that could be the house that you are talking about, we don't remember any other houses standing.

U: It might be.

A: The cemetery, where my grandfather and grandmother and two or three uncles and aunts were buried, was about a mile from our old homeplace.

U: And where is that cemetery exactly?

A: Well. . . .

U: From your home? Do you go farther up the road?

A: It's between. . . . You would come towards West Point. It was south of our house. There was an old, old log house that stood right across the road from that cemetery, but there is no trace of it now. It either burned or was torn down. Also, there was a nice big house that was standing there when I was young, and Miss Lucy Natchez¹ lived there. She cared for this afflicted child, Julian Watson.

U: Was it a brick or a wood house?

A: It was a wood house. I don't even remember seeing a brick house when

¹Also spelled Natcher or Nacher.

I was real young. I don't remember seeing any brick homes, you know, until after I got up a good many years old. We had brick store buildings and things like that, but as far as brick homes went, I don't even remember seeing any. There might have been some in the towns, but a brick home in the country was something unheard of back in those days.

U: Do you remember what her house looked like?

A: Yes, it was a big white house with a lot of rooms. The back of it faced the road. When you went into the property from the road, you would go on around the house and then come into the front. The front porch was on the east side. The back was facing the road, unless when the house was built, the road was different. The road could have been different, and they built the house facing that earlier road. But I don't even remember a road being on that side of the house.

U: Was it a one-story house?

A: Yes, it was a one-story house.

U: Was there another building near it?

A: There was the big home that I told you about that was right across the road from the cemetery. It was about as far from Lucy Natchez's as from here to the house across the road. (approximately two hundred feet)

U: Did anyone live there then?

A: Yes, there were people living there then. The first people I remember living there were Mr. and Mrs. Poss. They lived there for a number of years. The last people that I remember living there was Mr. and Mrs. Tom Brooks. Of course, that was after we moved away and I wasn't back up there all that much.

U: Is that house still there?

A: No, they're both gone. There's no trace of any of the old houses that I know anything about, that I can remember back when I was young. There was a big old two-story log house that stood up on the high bank of the river at Barton's Ferry where the ferry crossed the river. The water would get up so high that it would get in the house, but it never did get up into the second story.

The Uithovens lived there. Dr. Uithoven was an old Dutchman. He was a veterinarian, and he would doctor on people and on cattle and everything. He never had any formal schooling for either one, but in those days we just didn't have modern things like we do now. I can remember him coming to see some stock for my daddy, and he'd have on his old wooden Dutch shoes that he had brought here from Holland with him.

U: You say your dad kept horses and cattle.

A: Uh-huh.

U: Did he keep pigs and chickens?

A: Yes, he raised a lot of pigs and sold them, and my mother always raised a lot of chickens. Of course, they didn't have big flocks, you know, or big chicken houses then. You just had small flocks, enough for your home use, or maybe in the summertime, you might get a chance to sell half a dozen fryers at a time to somebody in town that didn't raise chickens. You took them to town alive and sold them live. Or maybe in the fall, they would buy a hen or two along because people didn't have ways to preserve and keep it. There weren't any freezers. They didn't even have an ice plant there. I can remember that the first ice plant that ever came to Eupora was after we had lived there several years. Before that, all the ice that people had was shipped in there in trains. You can imagine about how far that went.

U: Did your dad take all of his produce to West Point to sell it?

A: Yes, he took it to West Point.

U: And did you get store goods there?

A: Yes. They really had more drygoods stores there then than they do in West Point now. More places like Gibsons and Wal-Mart now, these discount stores, you know, Fred's and Murphy's, and places like that. Only they were what they called "department" stores in which they kept all kinds of merchandise.

U: There weren't really any stores out in Vinton?

A: No.

U: Just the post office in your house?

A: Well, there was a little store. Zack Ellis lived about two miles from there. After I got up big enough to remember, he had a small country store, and that was the only store that was out in that vicinity. Of course, he didn't carry all that much because it wasn't much bigger than this room. (approximately eight feet by twelve feet)

U: Was it in his house?

A: No, it was separate. It was a lot further from his house than from here across the road. (over two hundred feet)

U: You mentioned earlier that your family boarded the schoolteachers. Do you remember any of them?

A: Yes, Alice Landing was the first one that I remember Mama and them talking about. She was boarding there when my oldest brother who was four years older than I am was little. She taught him to walk. She would stand him up across the bed against the wall on the back

of the bed. Then she'd get on the other side of the bed and make him walk to her. That's the way she taught him to walk. She took her good thimble and punched a hole in it and stuck a straw in it and made him a pipe. After that, Miss Katie Watkins taught school there several years, then Miss Bessie Shirley, and then Miss Sarah Miller, also Selma Dale.

U: Did any of them stay long?

A: Yes, each one of them taught several years. I guess, Coy Ellis was the last. Someone told me that she refused to talk to you.

U: Uh-huh, she says she doesn't know anything.

A: Well, I seriously doubt that she does because she was Andy Ellis's second wife, and they didn't live out there but a year or two after they married. She really didn't know anything about the old Vinton community that used to be. She was the last teacher that taught that school. They done away with the school and moved it into West Point when school buses first came into use.

U: Was it a public school or was it private?

A: It was public. But in the beginning, it was only four months of the year. We had school four months of the year--November, December, January, and February. Then they got it up to six, and then they got it up to seven. When they quit having school out there, it was a seven-month school.

U: Why was it so few months of the year?

A: The county didn't have the money to pay the teachers to teach it longer. They didn't do then like they do now. You know, now if they don't have the money, they just go ahead and do it on credit, and somebody has to chalk up the money from somewhere to pay for it. (laughter) They kind of kept within the budget and held things down and took care of it as they went.

U: Do you remember what the inside of the school looked like? Did it have blackboards?

A: Yes, we had blackboards, and there was a stage built all the way across the front of it. Also, the school was used as the church at Vinton. I don't remember who preached out there. I don't even remember what denomination. It might have been that it was any denomination they could get to come and preach--Methodists or Baptists, or any denomination. They had Sunday school there every Sunday. But one Sunday a month, somebody came and preached. There was a stage, which was a step up, all the way across the school building. They had the teacher's desk up there. The blackboard was behind that. The school building had a door on either side of the back and double doors at the front. It had a big wood stove right out in the middle of the school building. They kept wood stacked under that school

building. The men of the community would go in the fall, early fall, and cut enough wood to do them the whole winter, and stack it under the school because it was fairly high off the ground. They had an organ up there, and while I was little there was always somebody that would come and play the organ.

They'd have Sunday school, and once a year, in the spring, they'd have what they called Children's Day. Some of the women in the community worked up a program. Usually it was the schoolteacher that taught the school. She usually worked up the program for Children's Day, and had all the children get up on the stage, you know, and recite parts that they had memorized. It was a great day, in that day and time, to have such as that.

They had wooden desks, more or less like the modern desks that they have now. Well, I think that they're getting away from that kind of a desk, but like the ones that they had in the 1960s and 1970s.

U: With the top that lifts up?

A: No, the top didn't lift up, but it had grillwork on the sides and a shelf underneath to put your books in. It had a little pencil tray and the inkwell on it to put your ink in. The seat then folded up, more or less like the ones that people nowadays can remember.

U: You told us that your father was a farmer and a horse trader. Did you and your brother ever help him on the family farm?

A: Well, my brothers did, but I wasn't hardly large enough. I can remember one year that was such a bad crop year that my oldest brother and I took a little iron-wheel wagon that my daddy had made out of cultivator wheels, and we uncoupled it. We had a pair of yearlings-- I don't even remember where my daddy got an oxbow to fit that size calves--and we would work them to the back part of that wagon. We gathered the corn crop that he made. It was such a poor year and made such a little corn that all the corn that was gathered we gathered with that wagon and that little yoke of oxen.

U: Did you help your mother in the house more then?

A: Oh, yes, she started me out. . . . When she married at sixteen, she didn't know how to cook. She did know how to sew and she liked sewing, but her mother had never taught her how to cook. She said they lived in the house with her mother and father in Carroll County the first year that they were married. But she said, "crazylike," she didn't have sense enough to know that she ought to be in that kitchen learning to cook. (laughter) She just went on her merry way having a good time. That fall when they moved up there and built that house, she said that they had thirty-three dollars in cash money to buy groceries and to buy horse feed to make a crop on that year. I know that sounds odd to a lot of people and a lot of people won't believe it. Now, can you imagine anybody getting by on thirty-three dollars? She said they did. Things were so cheap then that if anybody was really saving they could manage.

U: Did your dad do any hunting?

A: Yes, he hunted squirrels. Squirrel hunting was about all he ever did. He could go out and kill quite a few possums; that is the only hunting that I can remember. He had two nephews that were good hunters. They were quite a few years older than we children were. They loved to hunt, but they didn't have money for shells, so my daddy would buy shells for them. They would go hunting and come in with fifteen and twenty squirrels, so we had to eat them up. (laughter) We had plenty. Then there was no hunting season; you could go anytime of the year you wanted to go. We lived near Tombigbee River. Our land went right down to the edge of Tombigbee River, and you could go over there and catch all the fish you wanted. My daddy wasn't much of a fisherman but there was, more or less, somebody in the community always going fishing and catching fish and bringing them by there. You could buy a nice big fish for a dollar.

U: What kind of fish?

A: Well, either yellow cat or buffalo fish. I know the time that I got so sick, they bought a buffalo fish and it weighed fourteen pounds. My daddy got it for a dollar. He told my mama, "I'm going to ask my brother and his wife and their baby to eat dinner with us because we can't eat up this fish, you know, before it will spoil." They all came over and ate dinner and there was plenty left and he said, "Well, just stay and eat supper." I was a year and a half old, and their baby was just a year old. Well, both of us babies had colitis from that; they fed us fish and buttermilk. The doctor stayed there a day and a night going from one house to the other working with us. We were having spasms, just one spasm right after another. He said that the fish and buttermilk set up the poison.

U: What doctor?

A: Dr. George Darracott--from a community between Vinton and Aberdeen, named Darracott after the Darracott family. He was our family doctor.

U: Was he the only doctor around?

A: Only one from there to West Point or Aberdeen.

U: What were your father's brother and brother's wife named?

A: Theodore and Mamie Wilson. You interviewed one of their daughters, Mrs. Lucille Nevels. That was their second daughter.

U: Did his brother move here when your father moved here?

A: Uh-huh, they all moved together out there to the house across the road before they married. The old house that they lived in with my grandmother and grandfather was the house that they used for the stagecoach inn back in the stagecoach days. It was a stagecoach inn. But of course, before I was born, part of it had been torn away and

just enough of it left for a good-size dwelling house for a medium-size family.

U: Did they ever tell you what the house used to look like?

A: No, they never did tell me what it looked like. I don't remember that.

U: Is there an old road that goes by in front of it? Like an old stage-coach road that is different from the new paved road?

A: No, not that I can ever remember. The road between my parents' house and my grandparents' house was just about like it is from here to the house across the road about two hundred feet, and the road kind of went between them. If the road had ever been changed, there was no sign of it there, and I don't remember it.

U: You told us the story about fox hunting.

A: Yes, that was the Youngs that lived in Waverly Mansion. They held no regard for anyone's fences that fenced fields in. In the fall of the year when cotton opens, it took a farmer a long time to pick his own cotton, you know, or maybe hire enough Negroes that lived in the community to get it all out. And a lot of times they would have a big lot of cotton open. If a fox decided to go across that cotton patch, well, that bunch of foxhounds just took out right across there after them. My daddy said that he'd had as much as a bale of cotton knocked out from one fox's chasing in one night's time. He said he got tired of it, that they would cut his fences and ride their horses in. They rode horseback, you know, and followed the hounds. He said that he got tired of it and he got over in a plum thicket on the back side of the place, and when the fox came through he shot and killed it, and that put an end to the fox race. (laughter) They rode up on the horses, while he lay out in the plum thicket and took the worst cursing he ever got in his life. (laughter) But he said after that they never did cut another fence for him.

U: Plum thicket? Were there any other fruit trees around?

A: Oh, yes, we had a nice orchard; my daddy set out a big orchard there on the place. We had all kinds of peaches, pears, apples, and plums. You know table plums, all kinds. And in those days blackberries just grew everywhere; I mean real old-timey blackberries. We don't have very many of them around anymore.

U: What's an old-timey blackberry?

A: They grow up on big, long sprouts. Maybe a runner on them would be eight or ten feet long. If the berries we have now get three or four feet tall, you know, well, they call those blackberries. But those grew up and fell over and would come back to the ground. I've seen people stand in their tracks and take just one limb off of the berries and pick a bucketful off of one vine. So we had all the fruit

we needed, and my mother canned all the fruit and dried it. She'd dry apples, peaches, and pears. We would have plenty of dried fruit. We raised sweet potatoes and raised sorghum and cane. There were molasses mills all around over the country. Every two or three miles, well, there would be a molasses mill. People would haul their cane to the molasses mill in the fall and make molasses to do them the entire year. They'd grow enough meat and cure it to do them most of the year, and have home-cured meat and lard. There wasn't too much food you really had to buy. My daddy had bees; he had several hives of bees and honey. You just lived at home. You didn't have to go to the store for every meal you had. (laughter)

- U: Did your families trade food or sell food between other families living out there? Your dad had bees; would he sell honey to other people?
- A: Well, he usually gave it away. People gave it away. But one thing they did to have beef. . . . Of course, there was no ice--no way to keep beef or anything. So maybe one family would kill a beef and they would divide it out, you know, among the others in the community. Then the next time another family would kill one and they would divide it out that way. By doing that, well, they kept some beef fairly regularly. You hardly ever heard of selling a neighbor; you just didn't think about selling a neighbor anything to eat that way. You divided with them.
- U: You mentioned that your dad and most people raised cotton. Was there a cotton gin in the Vinton community?
- A: The closest one that I can remember was what they called Wash Davis's. I know you have been down the Barton's Ferry Road. Do you know where the old building is out there that says "antiques" on it--right out of town there about two miles from town?
- U: Uh-huh.
- A: That's where Wash Davis's gin was. Now that is an old antique building that's still standing. Every since I can remember that old building was a store, and then the gin was built onto it--kind of one conglomeration. (laughter) That Wash Davis was the old Wash Davis of the bunch of Davis Negroes that lived out in that community. Quite a few of them still live out there; they've all built nice homes out there now and done quite well.
- U: You mentioned Zack Ellis had a small store. Did he farm as well?
- A: Yes, he had a big farm and had lots of Negroes' houses. I can remember where he lived and that house is still standing now, but I don't know how old it is. It wasn't a log house, unless it has been covered over. It could have had siding put on, you know, over the logs. It had four big brick chimneys to it and had an upstairs. The kitchen was built off from the house, and you had to go out of the dining room door and cross an ell-like, and all that was open. Now, imagine

having to go that way back and forth to the kitchen bringing all the food. Of course, the kitchen was not screened; the rest of the house was screened when I can remember. But bringing all that food, taking all the dishes. Of course, they had a big bunch of Negroes, that just, you might say, lived in the kitchen--did all the cooking, all the dishwashing. Maybe some of their mothers went off and left them when they was small. They were more or less raised in that kitchen--fed and all. They slept in the cabins with some of the rest of them at night; but they more or less, called that their home.

U: Where was that house?

A: Do you know where London Chapel Church is? Negro Church?

U: No.

A: It's . . . do you know where Ed and Lilly Maude Wilson's place is?

U: No.

A: Well, I couldn't really tell you.

U: From the Vinton schoolhouse? Is it along the Old Aberdeen Road?

A: No, it's on the road to the Barton's Ferry Road, and there's a road now that turns off and comes down in front of that house and comes on down and comes out on Highway 50 over there.

U: When we get done, we could look at a map. I brought a map along, maybe that will help. I think I know where you mean. Were there any other families down there that had farms as big as Zack Ellis's?

A: Well, after you get . . . I don't know whether they still call that Vinton community or not. They call it Prairie View now. Out in the Prairie View community, there were the Shinns and the Crumps; I can remember those two. Back in those days we had a telephone line out there, and there was eight parties on it. The telephone company didn't have crews to go out and build lines, so everybody built their own lines across their own property. They went to the woods and cut saplings and made their poles and bought the wire and the insulators. They put up their own line and hooked it, you know, from one plantation to the next, and that's the way the telephone lines were built. You had the old crank phone on the wall and you knew your ring. Some would be one long and one short; others would be two longs and two shorts, or three shorts or four shorts--something like that. But everybody knew their own ring. If anything went wrong with your phone, well, the people on the line got out in the community and hunted it up and repaired it themselves.

U: You mentioned Ed and Lilly Maude Wilson; are they related to you as well?

A: Yes, Ed is a first cousin of mine, and his wife was a sister to my brother Frank's wife.

U: What were their maiden names?

A: They were Dukes.

U: Who was Ed Wilson's father?

A: Zack Wilson.

U: Was he one of your father's brothers?

A: Uh-huh.

U: How many brothers did he have?

A: There was nine boys and four girls--thirteen children, I think. Some of them died when they were two or three years old. Then he had one brother that died when he was sixteen years old. He had one brother that was killed in an automobile accident down at Lumberton, Mississippi. That was after he was grown, when he was working for the railroad. A car turned over with him and killed him when it ran into loose gravel.

U: Did your Grandfather Wilson farm as well?

A: Yeah, he farmed and also was supervisor, mayor, and justice of the peace in that community. I've been trying to get somebody to go to the courthouse and look it up. I'm so crippled up that when I walk out of the house I have to use a walker. I'm so crippled in my knees. I had surgery twelve years ago, and I have to walk on a walker, so I can't get around and do such as that anymore. Mrs. Robinson down here, my neighbor that lives in the second big old house down the road where the big magnolia trees are, her husband has been elected chancery clerk again. He was the chancery clerk for about twelve years, and then he ran for the senate down at Jackson and was elected. He will have served his four years the first of this year. He came back home and ran for the chancery clerk's position again and was reelected to it. So they'll be back in January; he'll be back in the courthouse. She has promised to look it up for me.

U: What are their names?

A: Harmon and Peggy Robinson. She said that she would look up the years my granddaddy was supervisor.

U: Do you remember anyone running the Barton's ferry? Was someone running it when you were little?

A: Yes, they did. Old Dr. Jan Uithoven ran it for years. I guess Ed Wilson was the last one to run it, before they did away with it.

U: Did you ever ride on it?

A: Oh, many a time. I used to go with Pappa. My daddy had another brother that lived just over the hill above the ferry. We'd go down there on a Sunday. They had two children about the same age as us. We'd

all go playing and they'd take us down to the ferry. Quite often somebody in a horse and buggy was crossing the ferry. It was back and forth quite often. My uncle used to take me and hold me and let me dangle my feet and legs off of the edge of the ferryboat in the river.

U: Was it big? Could you get more than one buggy on it at a time?

A: Oh, yes, you could get two or three buggies on it. You could get on two cars after they started putting cars across. After my son came back here from the Navy in 1957, he got a job over in Hamilton, Mississippi. They were building a plant. It was American Potash Company then, but they have sold out and it goes by another name, Kerr-McGee. They are making an entirely different product now. He got a job in the construction of the plant, and then when they completed it, he got a job in the plant there.

The nearest way for him to go to work was to go out and cross on the Barton's ferry, and it was almost a straight line then to Hamilton. But when the river was high, he had to go either by Aberdeen or around by Columbus. It stayed high so much of the time in bad weather that he stayed in Columbus most of the time at the YMCA. He'd leave home on Monday morning and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights he'd stay at the YMCA. Then on Friday afternoon when he got off from work, he'd come home. When they got Highway 50 built, he went that way to work. It's such a pity that they have to go around like they do now to get to Columbus.

U: I heard on the local news that the bridge is going to be fixed Saturday.

A: I'll be glad because my youngest son that was sick with a heart attack has to go to the doctor in Columbus.

U: When you were little, did it cost to ride on the ferry?

A: No, it didn't cost anything; the ferry was free. The county paid whoever was running the ferry, you know, like out of the supervisors' fund. That was run through the supervisors' fund, so the ferry was free. You could go across anytime you wanted to. All you had to do when you came up on the other side of the river was holler. They could hear you just as plain as anything. Whoever was running it would get up and go down there, put the ferry across and bring you across.

U: Was there ever anyone like a mayor for the community?

A: My grandfather was mayor. My daddy was the deputy sheriff for awhile, but I don't even remember which sheriff he was under. I can't remember that far back. (laughter)

I guess, come to think of it, if we would keep a diary, we could read it once in awhile and remember all these things. As you grow older

you tend to forget all of these facts that you knew when you were younger. I guess some of them just stand out and impress you more than others do.

U: Do you remember people keeping diaries or keeping letters or writing much?

A: Yes, for years my mother had a trunk, and so did my daddy, and she kept a lot of old letters. I don't remember who they were from--some were from some of her people and just different ones. I don't know for what reason she put them back in there, and my daddy did too, but in moving around so much and all, and cleaning out and getting rid of things, we threw them all away. Well, we didn't ever think that they would be worth anything. We had lots of family portraits and things in these big, old, huge, antique frames that now you could get a fortune for, and we took them out and burned them up because we didn't want them. You know, at one period in our history people just didn't keep such as that; they didn't have them in their homes. They went out of style, but now anybody would give their eyeteeth to get ahold of them. (laughter) I know, when I tell my son about doing away with them, he said, "I could just take you down and blister you." (laughter)

U: What was your mother's maiden name?

A: Mary Elizabeth Marshall.

U: Was the Marshall family from Clay County?

A: No, they were from Carroll County.

U: Did your mother move here with her family or when she was married?

A: When she married. Sometime after she married, her mother and daddy sold their place in Carroll County and moved to Eupora. They bought a farm there which made it a lot more convenient because, going to see them, you went on the train then. I can very well remember riding the train; I thought it was a thrill of a lifetime to get to go see Grandma and Grandpa--to ride the train.

U: Where did you get on the train?

A: West Point.

U: Did you take a lunch?

A: No, because usually they served a lunch on the train; there was a cafe that had an agreement with the railroad to prepare sack lunches, and they would come through the train with it. The schedule of the train was always about somewhere around noon--the one we caught. They usually had two a day, but one ran early in the morning. We never did catch that one because it was too early to get up and get to town to catch the early train. We would always just buy us a sack lunch and have that to eat on the train.

U: Did your mother cook on a woodstove?

A: Yes. She bought a big wrought-iron range stove the year I was born, in 1911. It had what they called a "reservoir" on it--a great big metal container. It was made out of copper and was attached to the side of the stove, next to the firebox, and you kept that full of water. Then you always had warm water. She cooked on that until, well, just a year before I married. We moved away from Eupora a year before I married and moved up here to Abbott, and she sold the stove and we cooked on. . . . My brother and his wife, we all lived in the house together. We moved into a big house, and we cooked on her stove. Hers was practically new, and Mama's was old and such a big old heavy stove to move, too. That's what I grew up with, used to cooking on a big old woodstove.

U: Do you like it better?

A: No, I wouldn't swap back for anything! I like the food on Mama's better; you could really cook some wonderful food on it. Nowadays I'd let the fire go out, and my food wouldn't cook. (laughter) I wouldn't go back to having to carry in the stovewood. Nowadays, people say, "Why don't you get a wood heater? Have a wood heater put into your house." I say, "Well, I grew up with all that--burning wood and having to carry in wood, and take out ashes, and everything. And as crippled up as I am, I couldn't afford to get into that again." I'll take the modern days. (laughter)

U: Is there a better kind of wood to use when you are cooking on a woodstove? Is pine good? Is oak good?

A: Well, I never cooked with coal in a stove. We always cooked with wood. Pine is the sorriest wood in the world for a cookstove. My husband and my daddy always tried to cut oak or ash. That's the two best woods for cooking on a woodstove.

U: Do they get real hot?

A: Uh-huh, they make real hot fires; that burns real good. That pine, it just burns out so fast; it doesn't really make all that much heat, either. It doesn't make as much heat as oak and ash and the other woods that hold fire and hold heat longer--burn longer.

U: When you were kids, did you ever get to play much down by the river?

A: No, my daddy wouldn't let us play near the river. Our land went right to the river, and we had quite a bunch of cows. He usually kept around seventy-five head of cattle. We didn't sell milk or cream or anything, but just raised the calves. Some of the cows would give too much milk to raise their calf, and we'd have to milk part of the milk from that cow, and turn around and feed the milk to the hogs. He'd send us. We had a big collie dog that was trained for a cow dog. There was a big high bluff all along our place, and then you went down that bluff, and there was a good long space under there that was

real shady and grassy and everything, kind of sloping down to the water's edge. In the afternoon, the cows would go down there to drink. It was cool and good grazing down there, and they wouldn't come out. We trained that dog to go down that bluff, and she would drive every cow out from under that bluff there. She knew the cows that we milked from the other cows. After she would get them on top of the bluff, she would go around and separate them out of that herd and start them on towards the house. To get them to the house we had to cross the public road. A cow daresn't stop and bite a bit of grass along the road. They could graze along in the pasture, but when they crossed that road, they daresn't stop and bite off a bite of grass till they got to the barn in the lot. My daddy always told us, "Whatever you do, don't y'all ever go down that bluff. If you can't get all the cows up, you come on back and leave them. Don't you ever go down." He was afraid that if we got down to that river, we might fall in. Neither one of us was big enough to swim; or at least, we hadn't been taught to swim. He wouldn't let us play near the river.

U: Can you think of any other stories? Any other things that impressed you when you were a child? Any practical jokes?

A: There weren't much practical jokes that you could play on anybody. The only real funny thing that I can remember--I don't really remember, but my mama told me about it--was the time that we got sick on the fish. She had to be so careful for a long time about what she let me eat. One Sunday Papa's brother that lived down near Barton's Ferry, he and his wife and two children came up and spent the day. After dinner there was a Negro man who came and had a ten-quart bucket of blackberries. Papa bought the bucket of blackberries from him. Mama carried them into the kitchen and set them on top. . . . She had the old wooden barrels, for flour barrels and meal barrels, and she had a big dishpan setting on the top of the meal barrel. She poured that bucket of berries into that pan. She had made a little box and covered it with velvet to stand up at the window; the windows were a little high for me to look out. I'd stand on that box and look out the windows.

Well, they were out on the front porch, and Aunt Annie and Mama got up to go out and look at the garden. They walked around and looked at the garden, just out in the yard, standing around talking. They told Papa to watch us children while they were gone. When she came back, she missed me. They got to hunting for me, and they were calling me, and I wouldn't answer. She said that when she found me, I was standing on my little wooden box and cramming those berries in with both hands! (laughter) They hadn't been washed or anything. She said that she just knew that she'd have to have the doctor with me before daylight. They said that done me more good than all the medicine the doctor had given me.

There were some berry vines that grew around our garden fence, so after that she would go and pick a few ripe ones everyday. She said that, as long as there was berries within reach, she'd go everyday and try to pick enough berries for me to eat.

U: The blackberry cure.

A: Yeah.

U: I'd like to thank you very much for this interview with you, both for the Project and for myself. I've enjoyed it, and you've given us a lot of information. Thank you very much.

A: Well, I don't feel like it's all that much information, but it's about the story of my life.

U: Well, we appreciate it. Thank you.

U: This is an interview with Mrs. Irene Armstrong for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Peggy Uland at Mrs. Armstrong's home, Route 1, Box 311, West Point, Mississippi 39773 on January 23, 1980. Her telephone number is 494-6570.

Is your brother Frank's wife, who was a Duke, still alive?

A: No, she passed away about four years ago.

U: What was her first name?

A: Velma. No, her first name was Myrtle--Myrtle Velma.

U: But they called her Velma?

A: Yes.

U: And one of her sisters was also married to one of your relatives?

A: To a first cousin, Ed Wilson. Lilly Maude Duke married Ed Wilson.

U: What are your Grandparents Wilsons' first names?

A: Henry and Catherine is all I know.

U: Did you ever hear Henry referred to as Squire Wilson?

A: Yes.

U: You told me about riding on the Barton Ferry and your uncle letting you dangle your feet in the water. . . .

A: That was my uncle Thomas Wilson.

U: You said he lived above the ferry?

A: He lived there with us.

U: Oh, he lived there with you.

A: Yes. He lived there with us after his wife passed away. Well, he had one child and she lived with his wife's mother.

U: What was his wife's name?

A: Martha.

U: What was their daughter's name?

A: Audrey.

U: Had they ever lived down by the ferry?

A: No.

U: You showed me the photo of the house you grew up in. Could you tell us more about the house?

A: (using photograph) Alright, there was just two rooms to the house originally. This was an open hall in here between them. This was the dining room and kitchen in this north room. This was a bedroom over here in the south room. Well, in later years then, my daddy enclosed this hall and we used that like a sitting room or a living room. Then he built two shed rooms on the back of the house. One was a kitchen and one was a dining room. Then he made this north room into another bedroom. We boarded the schoolteacher and she always stayed in this north room. We had double beds in this south room, and my youngest brother was so small when we left there that he was still sleeping in the cradle.

U: Does it have a chimney?

A: Yes. It didn't when the photograph was taken. It looks like it had a flue to it at that time--a flue on both ends. But when I could remember, there was a fireplace there in the south room, and we had a heater and a flue in this north room here.

U: Was the chimney made out of brick?

A: Yes.

U: Do you know where your dad got the brick?

A: No, I don't.

U: He built it himself?

A: No, he had someone to build it. He wasn't a brickmason.

U: Did the house stand up off the ground?

A: Yes. You can see the blocks.

EA: It's got what looks like a little picket fence around it.

A: It has. My daddy rove the palings out of white oak and built the fence himself.

EA: I have done it--boards and pickets. I can tell you something else I've done. I bet you can start out here right now and you wouldn't find one out of ten thousand that could, and that is make a white oak split basket. I could find the material. But let me tell you, oh, it works on your fingers.

U: How long did you do that?

EA: I made quite a few baskets. I did it for a number of years back.

U: Who taught you how to do that?

EA: A fellow, Kasy Smith, dead and gone, was an old man that showed me how. It was very simple. If I was to lay the splits down there, you could do it yourself. If I laid them down, you understand, and showed you what to do. You have to have odd-numbered ribs.

U: Is the hardest part getting the splits?

EA: Well, you see, it's working the splits in the ribs. You have to have an odd rib.

U: To make it come out even?

EA: Right. The reason I don't try to make anymore is that it is so hard on your fingers working them splits in there.

A: He really doesn't have any use for them. He used to make cotton baskets and corn baskets--great big baskets this big around (makes circle of arms) and about that deep (gestures three feet).

EA: It's hard on your fingers to work them splits into them ribs.

A: He made me little baskets about this long (gestures two feet) and about that wide (gestures nine to twelve inches) and about that deep (gestures nine to twelve inches) to gather vegetables out of the garden.

U: Did you ever make them out of anything but white oak?

EA: Well, I've made them out of different types of oak, overcup and white oak. What they call overcup is the biggest thing I ever made them out of. I have made them. This old fellow Kasy Smith lived up here about six miles above us. We were living there neighbor to him, and he showed me how. We went up in those bottoms and got the timber, and he showed me how to make them.

U: Do you know where he learned how to do that?

EA: I have no idea. He was an old man, and I was very young when I started this. I wasn't but about maybe twenty years old, nineteen or twenty. He showed me how.

U: Did you ever make them for anyone other than you family?

EA: Oh, yeah. I made them and sold them.

U: How much could you get for a cotton-size white oak basket?

EA: About two dollars. That was big money then. I'm not joking--big money. I made one for a Negro once. He told me to make him a basket that would hold a hundred and sixty pounds of cotton. I told him, "I'll tell you that's guessing. I can make you a big basket. What

you want me to do is make a basket big enough for one hundred and sixty pounds of cotton." He was working away. He worked away a whole lot and his wife picked cotton at home. He wanted a basket that would hold all the cotton that she would pick. So he told me, "I will come and pick cotton and pay for it." His helping me suited me mighty well. When I seen him after he got the basket, he says, "You know, you made too much basket. I can't handle it. I can't put it up in the wagon." (laughter) He says, "I wanted a big basket and you made me a big basket."

A: Well now, my parents' house was covered with boards instead of shingles. They rove the boards. It was my understanding that they carried the lumber off of the place to a sawmill and had it sawed. The outside of this house was built with just rough-sawed material.

U: What are the blocks that the house stands on made of?

A: They look like brick to me.

EA: They could be brick because wood blocks didn't stand too long. I've seen them on wood blocks.

A: They look like they're smaller at the top than they are at the bottom.

U: Who are the people in the photograph?

A: That's my daddy and that's my mother and that's my Granddaddy Wilson.

U: Who is the dog?

A: That's Andy, her bird dog. It was her dog, but Papa hunted him.

U: Do you remember the house that your grandparents lived in?

A: Yes, I remember it.

U: The old stagecoach place?

A: Yes.

U: They had died, though, before you were born?

A: Yes.

U: Had you ever been inside that house?

A: My Uncle Theodore, Lucille Nevells' Daddy, lived there after I could remember. Well, they lived there for a number of years, all the time I was growing up. They did move away from there before we left. They are the first people that I remember living there.

U: Do you know who moved in after they left?

A: No, I don't; I can't remember.

U: Could you tell me more about what your house looked like? What the outside looked like and what the rooms were inside?

A: The rooms were sealed with what was called tongue and groove sealing. It was a beautiful pine. If it had been varnished or something, it would have been darker, but it was just white and kind of real light-colored. Momma always kept it washed and kept it clean. The floor was white pine. I've seen her scrub that with homemade lye soap, and the floor would be just as white and pretty as any new lumber you ever saw.

U: Did the floorboards fit really tight together?

A: Yes, they fit real tight together. There wasn't any big loose cracks in it. It was well-made. It was a well-built house all right. We kept comfortable in it.

U: Do you know who built the house?

A: My daddy and some of his brothers--just different ones in the community. That's the way people lived then. You didn't get out here and hire a carpenter; you just done what you could yourself and your neighbors helped you.

U: This house that your grandfather lived in, then your Uncle Theodore lived in, could you tell me what that one looks like?

A: Well, not really, because the part that they used for the old stage-coach inn had all been torn away. There was just enough left for a family. I can remember it had about four or five rooms left to it.

U: One-story?

A: Yes. One-story.

U: Were all the rooms about the same size?

A: Yeah. Big rooms.

U: Did it have fireplaces?

A: Yeah, as well as I remember, it had a couple fireplaces to it.

U: Did it have a porch on the front?

A: Yes, in fact, it had two. It had a couple rooms coming this way and there was a porch here, and then it dropped back and had some rooms that way. Then there was a porch along that part there.

U: Do you know where the extra part was that they tore down?

A: No, I don't. I don't know which side or where it was.

U: Did that house have shingles on it?

A: I'm sure it had boards on it when it was first built.

U: Did your father have a smokehouse?

A: Yes, he sure did. He built it out of logs. He went to the woods and sawed the logs and notched them out.

U: How big was it?

A: I'd say it was about ten by twelve feet.

U: Was it much higher than a person's height?

A: Yes, you could stand up in it. It had a cone roof to it. It was covered with boards. He chinked all the cracks with mud and then put slats of wood over them. You can see (on the photograph of her house) these strips here on the walls. Instead of lumber going cross-ways like they build them now, they put the lumber up and down. Where every one of these narrow strips is was a crack between the boards. Well, they put these strips over it. After he put the mud in the smokehouse, well, he put these strips along the cracks to kind of fill it up to keep the mud from falling out.

U: Was that built off the ground, too?

A: No, it was on the ground; it had a dirt floor in it.

U: Did it have shelving in it or hooks?

A: Yes, it had shelves. The joists had hooks and things to hang his meat on to smoke it after he killed his meat.

U: Where did he put the fire in there?

A: Right in the middle on the ground.

U: It didn't have a stone ring around it or a pit dug out?

A: No.

U: Just on the dirt floor?

A: Just on the dirt floor.

U: Was there any other kind of hardware with that building besides the hooks in the rafters?

A: Not that I can remember. Momma kept her canned fruit and everything out there.

U: In the smokehouse?

A: In the smokehouse. That's why he chinked it with mud and put the planks on it--to keep stuff from freezing. In real bad cold weather, I've seen her take old quilts out there and cover all that stuff up. We never lost anything from freezing.

U: Did he have a barn?

A: Oh, yes. He had a big barn. We had a good many cattle. We had a ten-rail fence around the barn for a lot.

U: What is a ten-rail fence?

A: Did you ever see a split rail fence?

EA: They was zig-zaggedy stacked.

A: Well, he had one that was ten rails high. Most fences that we see out here are just about this high (gestures three to four feet)--five and six rails maybe. This one was ten rails high. We had a bunch of goats one time. We had a big old billy goat, and he could jump that ten-rail fence.

U: What were the rails made out of?

A: Oak. There were some kind of oak.

U: And he cut all of that timber on his place for those fences?

A: Yeah, on his place.

U: What was his barn like?

A: Well, it was a big barn. A hallway went in on one side and then there was a big crib right in the middle. Then on the other side, it had two horse stalls. There was a hallway went on down between there and the back. In the back, he had some calf mangers where he kept his calf stalls. Then the other part was for hay. The barn was kind of tall and had a loft to it. He put hay up in the loft, and then he put some down in this big portion that he didn't use for stalls and things.

U: Was that made out of sawed timber as well?

A: Yes. He sawed the timber; only the crib was made out of logs.

U: Do you know where the sawmill was that they might have used?

A: No, I don't. It was back on the river somewhere. It was about a mile from our house to the river. It was not on our place, but somewhere in the neighborhood where it was close enough that he could haul logs to it.

U: You had the house and the smokehouse and the barn, were there any other out-buildings?

A: We had a chicken house.

U: What was that like?

A: Well, I'd say it was just about a 15' x 20' building with a cone roof to it. It just had the regular roost poles like the old-timey, old-fashioned ones. I don't know whether you've ever seen one.

U: No. Can you tell me what that's like?

A: Well, they built kind of like a rack. They built it slanting down from the back to the front and put poles across there about this big around (circles thumb and forefinger) for the chickens to hold on to with their feet. They roost on those poles.

U: Was the building tall enough to stand up in?

A: Oh, yes. It was a big tall building. Usually around the wall of it where the roost poles stopped, he had nests built for the hens to lay in.

U: Did it have a dirt floor?

A: Yes.

U: You said you had a well at your house?

A: Yes, it was one of these old-timey pumps.

EA: Pitcher pump?

A: No, it wasn't a pitcher pump. You remember the kind of pump they had out here? The kind we had at Crawford?

EA: That's what you call a set-rod pump.

A: It was the hardest thing to pump that you ever saw in your life. The water came to the top of the ground and they couldn't get it to overflow. There were lots of overflowing wells in that country back in those days. I'd say it's been about twenty-five years ago those wells stopped overflowing, didn't they?

EA: No.

A: Well, the biggest portion of them.

EA: Well, about the biggest portion of them. Now let me see, did somebody tell me that there is one somewhere that was level with the top of the ground now down in the country here somewhere on the river? I believe Ed Wilson told me he knew where there was still one that's just running at the top of the ground. Well, I've seen one out yonder in that neighborhood over on the river where we are talking about right now that was about five feet high. It had a two-inch pipe come out of the ground with a pipe come over this way and then a pipe bent

down this way. You could have taken a glass and held it just directly under there and you couldn't have gotten a drink of water.

A: It was such a strong force that it would knock it all out of there.

EA: You would have to just barely hit the stream of water that was coming out. I've seen it several times that way, but the last time I saw it they had cut the pipe off, and it was just running at the level of the top of the ground. The river bank was about as close to it as to the back of your car out yonder about fifty feet. It was about that deep down to the water level of the river when it was down. Now that's the way they went down.

A: You've heard me talk about Zack Ellis, a cousin of my daddy's. Well, there was one like that on the farm he lived on down there. It was the strongest one I ever saw.

EA: That one was over there past what they called Ruble camp at that time. That was years ago. Then it kept dropping down into other people's hands, you know. He died and other people got it. The last I know anything about it Herbert Pearson had it. Is Herbert dead or alive?

A: No, he's still living, but he's in bad health.

EA: I don't know whether he controls that or not. They put a whole lot of old gas wells in there. The last two times I was out there, I went out there to help put some water in some tanks. We had to fill vats to haul water out there. I went with them to pump it out of them vats into them tanks for some purpose. Now I don't understand all of this oil business. I don't know how many wells is out there now. The last time that I was out there was to this well. They've put two in there because they are putting them in and we don't know nothing about it.

U: So, you had a set-rod pump?

EA: It had a cylinder about two feet long on it, and it was about three inches in diameter. It had valves in it and it worked up and down with a handle on a steel stand. The rods were fastened to this stand and went from the top down to whatever depth you wanted to put it. This little rod was in there fastened to the cylinder which was fastened on the bottom of the big pipe. I've seen some of them use wood rods which were about an inch in diameter with a connection screwed in on each end. Some of them used steel rods. They got to using steel rods with couplings which was a pain; they'd break in two. I have helped to pull those things until I wanted to put dynamite in and blow them up.

A: This well was five hundred and seventy-six feet deep. They drilled it and got the water to where you could reach down in there and touch it with your hand, and it still wouldn't flow out. They drilled a good many feet deeper and it still wouldn't flow out. They were trying for an overflowing well.

U: Was the well itself lined with something like brick or wood planking?

EA: Well, what they did was put a four-inch casing down according to whatever they needed. Most of them went about thirty feet deep.

U: What was that casing made out of?

EA: Made out of steel.

U: Do you remember the one at your place as steel?

A: Yes. It was round and had a kind of a collar that the pump fit on. You screwed it to the casing.

U: A lot of old house sites that we've seen have large shade trees and often lots of flowers. Were there any big trees like that around your parents' place?

A: Yes.

U: What kind of trees?

A: I really don't remember. There was a big one right at this south end of the house. Seems to me like one of them was a sassafras tree that was out back here, but I believe this was a sweet gum that was right down here at this end. There were two more, I know, back here and one kind of back this way; I know this was a sweet gum back there on the north end.

U: Did your mother have flowers around the house?

A: Oh, yes. She had this whole yard full. You can see a good many of the rose bushes here now. See, all along there. (pointing to picture of house) She just had that whole yard full of rose bushes. She didn't have very many small flowers. She mostly had roses. She kept that ground scraped off just as white and clean. There was not a sprig of grass anywhere on the yard. Then right down here at the south end she had a big Cape Jasmine bush--gardenia we call it. That was the largest bush that I have ever seen of that type. This tree stood close to it. My daddy hauled a big wagon load of sand or maybe two or three wagon loads of sand for us children to play in. I can remember my brother burying me up to my neck. I'd sit down and he'd bury me up to my neck in sand.

U: He brought the sand from down at the river?

A: Yes.

U: Do you remember big shade trees or flowers around your grandparents' house?

A: There wasn't as many trees over there. The well there at that place was a big old dug well. It was big huge square thing, and you let a big bucket down in there.

U: Could you tell me what a dug well is?

A: You just dig it with shovels and things.

EA: Short-handled shovels. You pull that dirt out by a rope set up on a frame over the well. Pull that up on a rope as they fill that bucket. You just dug as you went until you found the water.

A: You put a man down in there.

U: Do you have to line that kind of well?

A: Lined it with wood.

EA: I've seen one that had what I reckon you'd call stone culverts-- about five feet big. I see one that way, but most of them was framed with wood 2" x 4"s.

U: So this one at your grandparents' was wood-lined and maybe three feet? Or bigger?

A: At least three feet square if not four. Three or four feet square.

U: Did they have a frame up over it to put the bucket on?

A: They had a solid wooden frame just like a box built up about three feet high. There was a hole cut in there for the bucket to go down in. This framework was up over there with a pulley and a windlass.

EA: Oh, you could get some of the best water up from those wells.

U: Could you tell me about the shade trees and flowers at your grandparents' house?

A: The shade trees were all out back except one on the south end, as well as I remember. There was one shade tree on the south end. Then all out in back of the house there was a lot of fig trees and peach trees that I can remember.

U: So that house faced west?

A: West. And ours faced east.

U: Do you remember flowers there?

A: No, I'm sure there were but I don't remember very well.

U: When you told me about Lucy Natchez's house, do you remember shade trees or flowers at her house?

A: There was only one big shade tree that I remember, and it was a huge oak tree. The house faced the east; the back of it was to the main road. Unless the road had been changed after the house was built, it faced away from the road.

U: Where did the shade tree stand next to the house?

A: It was on the east side, on the front, down kind of toward the south-east end of the house.

U: Do you remember any flowers at her place?

A: No, I don't.

U: You told me about the old log house that the Poss family lived in. Do you remember trees or flowers at their house?

A: There was no trees around there or flowers or anything. It was set up on a little knoll on what looked like old red sandstone that had kind of washed away.

U: So it was very open around their house?

A: Yes.

U: The house that the Poss family lived in, do you know if that had always been a family home? Could that have been a store at one time?

A: Well, now there was a store out there somewhere. I believe George Howard--I talked to him since I saw you--told me that there was a store out there somewhere, but I don't remember where it was. The only store that I can remember was the one Zack Ellis had.

U: But you don't remember another building close to where the Poss family lived?

A: No. I believe George Howard told me what the name of that cemetery was. Seems to me like he told me it was the Taylor Cemetery.

U: The house that the Poss family lived in, which way did that house face?

A: It faced the south.

U: Did they have a big porch?

A: Had a big porch. It was going this way. Like this is the south, the house run longways this way and then had a room across this way. Then the rest of it was a porch all along facing the south.

U: Have you ever heard of a G. S. Neville?

A: No, that wouldn't have been Lucille's husband because his name was Norman Nevels.

U: You told me about the big house that Lucy Natchez lived in and that she took care of a child. . . .

A: Julian Watson.

U: Was that her family home or did she live in. . . . ?

A: I don't know whether it belonged to her or whether it belonged to the Watsons. I really and truly believe that it belonged to the Watson family because they have a lot of land all around there still. One of the old man Henry Watson's kin lives out there. I guess it's his grandson. Well, he just died in the last few years. His home is still out there. His wife and all still lives out there.

U: That home that she lived in, did that have a big fenced yard or any outbuildings or a barn?

A: I don't remember any outbuildings or anything. There must have been a little barn there because she had a horse and buggy. I'm sure she kept that buggy inside and didn't let it stand out in the weather because it was always ready when she wanted to go. I'm sure there was some kind of a barn for that horse and for that buggy, but I don't remember.

U: Was her house built on piers?

A: Yes. It was built up kind of high and it had lattice slats around it from the ground up crossways which made little checkerboards.

U: Do you know what those piers were made out of? Could you see them through the lattice work?

A: No, if you could I don't remember what they were.

U: Did you ever hear of a Coltrane home out in that community?

A: No, that was before my day. There was a Colton place.

U: You told us that your father was a horse trader. Was there a blacksmith out in that community? Or did he shoe his own horses?

A: He did shoe some of them, but he carried it to somebody. But who it was I don't remember; I was so small.

U: Do you think it was close? Was it as far as West Point?

A: No, he didn't take them to West Point to have them shod. It was somebody in the community. It could have been a Negro. I don't know.

EA: You know there was people all over the country. You see all of the plow tools had to be hammered out by coals from a bellows. Some, of course then, might have been old hand bellows and some of them a forge where you turn them. Anyway, they had to hammer out all of the plow tools--your sweeps, your points, all of your plows. There were blacksmith shops all over the country and most of them shod horses. There were a good lots of horses and mules, too. Nearly all of them shod horses and mules.

U: But as a child you don't remember a blacksmith shop?

A: No.

U: Have you ever heard of any of the roads out in Vinton being called by street names?

A: No.

U: Like someone saying, "I live on Court Street or Union Street."

A: No.

U: Have you ever heard of the Cogsdell brothers?

A: There was two of them. Barney and--I can't remember the other one's name. In fact, Barney Cogsdell's granddaughter lives right over here not too far from us. Barney Cogsdell's brother's name was Dan Cogsdell.

U: What is her name?

A: Mabel Kisner.

U: How do you spell the last name?

A: K-I-S-N-E-R.

U: And she's his granddaughter? Do you remember where the Cogsdell brothers lived?

A: No, it was back over towards the river and somehow back on the river. I don't know where all the houses were back in there; I just didn't go to all of them.

U: Did you ever hear of a kennel out there where people raised dogs and then had field days where they raced the dogs?

A: No. The only place where they kept a big bunch of dogs that I know of was down there at Waverly mansion. That's the only place that I know of that they had a lot of dogs and had fox races.

U: Did you ever hear of a cotton landing at Vinton or a ferry at Vinton?

A: No. I don't think there was ever one there unless it was before they put Bartons Ferry where it is because that would have been too close together. We lived just a mile north of Bartons Ferry. They could have forded the river.

EA: They forded the river just below the mouth of the Buttahatchie which comes in from the east side. Now I've heard them talk of that. I've been in there. I've been up and down that river hunting and fishing a whole lot. They used to ford that river there, of course, when it was down. It was a gravel shoal. You went in and went down a bank that is on this side of the river in there. Much of that is cliffs.

The river is right down here. You stand up yonder and look down into the river. Well, they had to go down a road that goes in to that crossing. I've heard them talk of that. Now as to what, I can't tell you nothing about it. All I know is I've been to it and they told me about all this.

U: You told us a story about being ill and the doctor coming to your house. For medicine, did your mother have home remedies or did you buy store patent medicine?

A: Well, mostly it was store patent medicine--what the doctor didn't prescribe. I don't remember her making her own remedies often. Well, she'd make up concoctions of bought stuff. I've seen her take honey, and ginger, and alum and mix it up and make a cough syrup out of it.

U: But she didn't have an herb garden?

A: No. The only herb that I can remember her raising was sage. She used that making sausage in the wintertime. She parched it and rubbed it through a sifter and powdered her own sage to go in sausage.

U: The store-bought patent medicine, would you get those things in West Point or did Zack Ellis have things like that?

A: Well, I don't remember. He kept Vick's salve and a few things like that. But most of the time you bought quinine. I can even remember back when I was a child that you could go to town and buy a big bottle of morphine just like you'd walk in and buy anything. Everybody kept it and we didn't have addicts on it like we do today. Everybody kept laudanum. Now that was a very potent narcotic. It was a liquid. They didn't use it all the time; they just used it when you had an illness and lots of times they saved a doctor bill.

EA: The only thing I ever remember about laudanum is a hollow tooth my mother had. Poppa put some laudanum on it and a wad of cotton and stuck it down in there.

U: For a toothache?

A: Toothache. That's the only thing I can ever remember.

U: What kind of celebrations did you have at Christmastime?

A: Well, we usually had them at the school. Before the teacher turned out for Christmas holidays, she always put on some kind of a little play. We had a Christmas tree. Each family would take gifts for their children--some little gift for each child--and put on the Christmas tree with their name on it. Every child then got a Christmas gift, and had that little play. That was all the entertainment we had.

U: You didn't have Christmas trees in your home?

A: No.

U: You mentioned that Zack Ellis is a cousin of your dad's. Do you know how they are related?

A: I think he was related on my grandmother's side of the house, but I don't know how it all tied in.

U: Have you ever heard of a man named Levi Hollins?

A: Yes. He was a Negro.

U: Did he live out in Vinton?

A: Yes.

U: Do you remember meeting him?

A: Oh, yes. I've seen him lots of times.

U: Do you know what he did for a living?

A: Farmed.

U: Have you ever heard of a man named Fisherman Harris?

A: There was some Harrises that lived out there, but now what his first name was I don't remember. I remember going to school with his children.

U: Were they white?

A: Yes. There was no colored children that ever went to school out there.

EA: Irene, that would be Joe Harris. I remember him.

U: Joe Harris is called Fisherman Harris?

A: I'm sure because that's all he ever done that I ever knew of.

EA: He wasn't big. He might have been as big as you. He stayed there until he was an old, old man.

U: He made his livelihood catching fish on the Tombigbee River?

EA: Right.

U: How old was he when you knew him?

EA: Well, I'll tell you I'm not going to try to say, but he was up in age. He was very old. I won't try to say how old he was. He stayed out there in a camp down on the river. He might have been as big as you, but he'd get out there and wrestle with a fishnet. I don't know whether you've ever seen them fishnets. Well anyway, the hoops are sixteen feet long and the front is three feet, and then you take the

the back smaller and smaller and smaller. They are sixteen feet long string nets--mesh nets. I have seen him raise them out of the river up to the side of the boat. You tied each end to hold them straight. I have seen him raise them nets and take fish out of them.

U: What kind of fish did he usually catch?

EA: They caught buffalo and they caught catfish.

A: And drum.

U: What did he do with those fish?

EA: Sold them.

U: Take them to West Point?

A: People in the community would buy them.

EA: People in the community and he'd take them then into town or someone else would. I won't say he did directly, but anyway they were sold in town. Most of the time, people in town would know when he was going to run them nets and they would go out there and get them fish a whole lot. Or maybe somebody would take them in for him. He didn't have no transportation. Lots of people were going out, and they would take them in for these people to come and get them.

U: Have you ever heard of a man named Job Trotter?

A: Yes, he was the man that bought our place when we sold it.

U: Did he live there on the place?

A: No. He didn't keep it long. He sold it to somebody else. Somebody else bought it and rebuilt the house.

U: Did he live out in the Vinton community?

A: No. He lived in town.

U: In West Point?

A: (nods yes) I remember him very well because he and his two boys came to our house every Friday they came out to Vinton. His wife was Catholic and back in those days they fasted on Friday. She wouldn't cook anything for them to eat, so they knew they weren't going to have anything to eat. They were there for breakfast, dinner, and supper. We could look for them.

U: Do you know if his family was from the Vinton community?

A: No, I sure don't. I never heard of them talking about ever living out there.

U: Have you ever heard of a man named E. F. Gibson?

A: Yes. They lived on up the road a piece from us, across the road from the Duke home. They were related to the Dukes. I don't know just how the relation came about.

U: You have a picture here of a Trannie Wilson on horseback. Could you tell me a little bit about him?

A: Yes. He lived up on the hill not too far from Bartons Ferry for a number of years.

U: Was he married?

A: Yes. He married Annie Tribble. They had two children and he left there and went to Parchman and worked for sixteen years down at Parchman.

U: Do you remember anything about his house?

A: Well, it was just the old-fashioned type house. It had two rooms and an open hall and then kind of a shed room back here and a kitchen and dining room over on the other side, and kind of a back porch.

U: What did he do for a living?

A: He farmed.

U: Did he farm right around his house?

A: Yes.

U: I'd like to thank you very much for this interview on behalf of the Project and myself.

U: This is an interview with Mrs. Irene Armstrong for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Peggy Uland at Mrs. Armstrong's home. Her address is Route 1, Box 311, West Point, Mississippi 39773. The date is March 11, 1980. Her telephone number is 494-6570.

It always seems like I have a few more questions for you. In the photographs that you loaned me, there is a picture of an Uncle John and his wife Evalena. Do you know if they ever lived in the Vinton area?

A: No, not that I ever know of. They always lived up around Fulton.

U: When the family came from North Carolina, they came, too?

A: I don't know because I don't know how long my family had been here when they settled out there in Clay County.

U: But you remember he and his wife being up near Fulton?

A: Yeah. I've been up there to see them; he was my daddy's oldest brother.

U: Did they have any children?

A: Oh, yeah. They had seven or eight children.

U: A whole house full.

A: All of the children are dead now.

U: You mentioned another one of your dad's brothers. His name was Zack Wilson. His wife is Parolee. Do you know where they lived?

A: Yes, that's one of the house sites that I can remember. It would be southeast of where my granddaddy lived in the old stagecoach inn house. That would be nearly a mile back southeast of them. I remember the old house being there. Then after the house was gone, I remember the house seat being there because of the flowers and shrubbery. They had a pomegranate tree there. We'd go there every year and get pomegranates.

U: Do you remember the house when it was standing?

A: Yes, I remember the house when it was standing.

U: What did it look like?

A: Well, it looked a little bit like our old homeplace. It was just two rooms. It didn't have the open hall in it. It was two rooms with them two shed rooms added to it.

U: So it was just two rooms together?

A: Yeah. Our house had an open hall through it. In later years, my daddy closed the hall in and made two rooms out of it.

U: Did it have a chimney in it?

A: Yes, it had a double chimney. Where our house had a chimney at each end, this house had a double chimney between the two rooms which were the two bedrooms.

U: In each room there was an opening to one big fireplace?

A: Yes, a big fireplace in each bedroom.

U: When you say that it was south and east, was it closer to the river?

A: Yes, back in there close to Millstone Branch.

Then there was another house place. I mentioned that Mr. and Mrs. Tom Brooks had lived in what I called the old Poss house, where the Posses lived. Well, they also lived right at the corner where you turn around Vinton schoolhouse. The road goes west from Vinton schoolhouse. Then there was a road that turned and went right straight on east towards the river and across Millstone Branch. You have Millstone Branch on that map. Their house was I guess, about as far past Millstone Branch as from here to Walt Hearst's house. (approximately 500 yds.)

U: If you were going down that east road, was it on the south side or the north side of that little road?

A: It would be on the south side.

U: Do you remember what that one looks like?

A: Yes, I remember it. It was more like our house. It was built with two rooms and an open hall with one kind of long room behind it for the kitchen and dining room. Then it had a porch on the back, on the west side of the kitchen.

U: Do you remember what he did for a living?

A: Farmed.

U: Did he farm around his place?

A: Yes.

U: Did he have any fruit trees, like pomegranate trees, at his house?

A: I don't remember whether he had any or not. They only had one child, a daughter Pearl. She married Homer Duke. They had six

children. He died with pneumonia and left Pearl with those six small children to raise. They were real close together in age. In those days, there weren't jobs for women unless they had gone to school and took special training for it. Most of them had to farm. She had to farm with those six small children to make a living.

U: When she married Homer Duke, where did they live?

A: I don't really know. They just lived around. There were two more houses up on the place where the Dukes lived. Ed and Lilly Maude Wilson--Lilly Maude Duke was married to Ed Wilson--they lived in one of them. Homer and Pearl could have lived in the other one. I just don't remember.

In later years, I remember where they lived. They had been back over west of us. Where the roads fork and go towards White Station, there is a road that turns and comes back in the Barton Ferry Road. It comes in right there at Town Creek. There was a house along up there where they lived. They were living somewhere in along there when Homer died. She lived on there for a number of years. I don't even remember who owned the farm that they were living on. I just know where the place was.

U: What did your Uncle Zack do?

A: He farmed and trapped. He and Mr. Ab Duke trapped every winter. They would leave home and sometimes be gone three months before they would come home. They would trap that river from Bartons Ferry up to Fulton. They'd go clear up to his brother John Wilson's up at Fulton. They just camped out in the wintertime. They would build them lean-tos, or brush arbors and things to get out of the cold and the bad weather.

U: What is a brush arbor?

A: They just put up four poles and put some poles across it. Then put brush all over the top of it, real thick and heavy, enough that it makes a top that is waterproof.

U: Do you know what they did with the pelts?

A: They sold them. They shipped them to the F. C. Taylor Fur Company in St. Louis.

U: Did they have to wrap them up and take them to someplace?

A: They had to skin the animals and stretch them on boards and dry the skins. Then they tied them up in bundles and shipped them on the train by railway express.

U: Where would they take them to put them on the train?

A: West Point.

U: How would they find out about a company like that?

A: I don't know. To my understanding, that F. C. Taylor Fur Company is still in business.

U: Where did Ed Wilson live?

A: He lived, in later years, just up the road from Bartons Ferry. You know where you turn off of the Barton Ferry Road to go up toward Vinton. Well, he lived in the first house up that road. It would be on your right-hand side going up that road.

U: Is that house still there?

A: Yeah, it is still there. The family just moved out of it. It has gotten in such bad shape that they had to move out of it. They have bought them a trailer. The trailer was already in place over here on Lone Oak Drive next to my brother and his family who lives over there. Pearsons moved over there. They were the last ones that lived in Ed and Lilly Maude Duke Wilson's house.

U: You mentioned to me one time that your grandparents and some of your aunts and uncles were buried in the Vinton Cemetery. Have you ever been to the graves? Do you know where in the cemetery they are?

A: It is on the east side, right on the edge.

U: Toward the northern part or the southern part of the east side?

A: About middleways of the cemetery on the east side.

U: Do they have stone markers?

A: No, they don't have any stone markers. My daddy knew where the graves were. That is the only way I knew where they were.

U: Did people usually not put up markers?

A: Not many of them. Not unless they were a little bit wealthy.

U: Was it hard to find a stone marker?

A: I don't know if it was hard, or whether the people just didn't go in for it, or they just felt like they couldn't afford it. I really don't know what the price of markers was in that day and time. Then they didn't have the little flat markers like we have now. They were kind of big, round, tall monuments. Those cost a lot more now than the little flat type markers that most of them use.

U: Have you ever been to a funeral in that cemetery?

A: No, I have never been to a funeral at the cemetery. My Uncle Zack and his wife and all three of his children are buried up in Monroe

County, at a cemetery called Lebanon. They had a girl that died when she was seven years old with heart trouble. Her name was Katie Lou.

U: Is that because they lived closer up there, or because they went to the church up there?

A: Well, there was a church at Lebanon, but it's a Methodist church. They went to the Baptist church at Bethel which was between their house and Lebanon. I just really don't know why they selected that cemetery. It is a beautiful well-kept cemetery.

U: The last time I was here we talked about a house, but not on tape. You told me that after you moved away, your father decided that you might move back, and you lived in a house down by the Barton ferry for a few weeks.

A: We lived there two weeks. He found out that he had real bad heart trouble. He called my mama's brother in Eupora and asked him if he had rented the house that we moved out of. He told him no he hadn't. He says, "Well, don't rent it. We're moving back." He told him why. He said that he didn't want to leave Mama sitting up there on the bank of that river with three small children.

U: Where was that house?

A: It was right up on the north bank as you go down the drive to the ferry landing. It wasn't any farther up on that bluff than from here to that house across the road. There is a camphouse sitting right up there now, or there was the last time that I was out there.

U: In the same spot, or near it?

A: It is practically the same spot. I'd say the same spot that the big house was.

U: What did the house look like?

A: It was built out of logs. It had four rooms downstairs and two upstairs.

U: So, it was a two-story house?

A: Yes, it is a two-story house. When the river would get up, the water would get in the bottom story. They could go in and out through the windows in a boat. It never did get in the upper story. The people that lived there just moved their furniture and everything. They would see the water rising, and they'd move all their furniture that was downstairs, upstairs. They'd stay there and come out in a boat, if they had to come out for anything.

U: Which way was the front of the house?

- A: The front of the house faced the west.
- U: Did it have a porch?
- A: Yes, it had a front porch to it.
- U: Did it have chimneys?
- A: Yes, it had a double chimney. It had four fireplaces because there were two bedrooms downstairs that had fireplaces, and then it went on up between them and had two fireplaces upstairs.
- U: Was there one main chimney that they all came off of?
- A: Yeah.
- U: Were there two rooms downstairs that didn't have fireplaces?
- A: Well, the kitchen and dining room. The kitchen had a flue in it for the wood cookstove. The dining room didn't have heat in it.
- U: When you say that it was out of logs, do you mean that they were hewn and notched?
- A: Hewn and notched logs.
- U: Did it have any plank wood in it anyplace?
- A: Yes, the inside was chinked with mud in the cracks. Then it had strips of plank about this wide put over that all along to cover that up.
- U: Did it have glass windows?
- A: Yes, it had glass windows.
- U: Both downstairs and upstairs?
- A: Yes.
- U: What kind of roof did it have on it?
- A: It had a wooden shingle or wooden board roof. They rived the boards for a board top.
- U: Was there a well there with that house, or did you go to the river for water?
- A: No, there was a spring. It was across the drive going down to the ferry. I don't think that the spring is running now; I think that it has quit running. It was running. There was a steep bank on the south side, and it was running out there. There was a great big round hole of water, something like this. You would dip your water

up out of that. It was as clear as crystal. There was never any trash or anything in it. It was just as icy cold as it could be.

U: Were there any outbuildings like an outhouse or a barn?

A: It had a smokehouse and an outdoor toilet.

U: Was there a barn?

A: No, there was no barn there.

U: Do you know if it was abandoned when you moved into it?

A: Well, there had been people living there. I don't really know how long ago they had moved out of the house when we moved there. Somebody had been living there; that's where the people who ran the ferry lived. I suppose that old Dr. Uithoven was the last one who lived in it before we moved into it.

U: Do you know what year you were there?

A: We moved to Eupora in December 1919. It would have been about 1921 or 1922 that we lived there.

U: You told me about your Uncle Trannie and his wife, Annie Tribble. You told me that they lived near the Barton ferry.

A: Yeah. You asked about the Coltranes out there. I never heard of any Coltranes, but the place that they lived on was called the Colton place. It was up on the hill, just as you come up from the ferry. This house stood over on the right side of the road going towards the ferry, up on the hill. (phone call)

U: You were telling me that your Uncle Trannie lived on the Colton place. If I am going down to the Bartons ferry on the road, is it on the right-hand side?

A: Yes, the last hill before you get to the ferry.

U: Is it before you get to where this little spring is?

A: Yeah.

U: Is it real close to that spring or is it farther back?

A: It is way farther back. It is at least a half-a-mile uphill from it.

U: Is it maybe halfway between the ferry and the road that goes up, the road that cuts north and goes up to where Uithovens lived later?

A: It would be further up the road than where you go to the Uithovens.

U: It is a big hill on the south side of the road then.

A: There is no house there now; it's all gone.

U: Was that a one-story dogtrot with an open hall between them?

A: Yes.

U: Had the Coltons lived there before he moved in?

A: I don't know.

U: Was that just what they called it?

A: Yeah, they called it the Colton place. Places went by names of people that had first settled there. They always called it the Colton place.

U: Okay. You told me at one time that your son Norman had taken that pegged table that had been in your mother's house, and that he had some antique dishes that had been your mother's. What did they look like?

A: I have some of the dishes yet.

U: Would it be easier if we brought them in here, or should we go in there?

A: You can come in here. (changed location)

U: Were these the dishes that were in your mother's house when you were a child?

A: She bought them when I was about four years old. She bought them from Dr. Uithoven's daughter who was selling out and going to California. There is one of the dishes. Do you see this platter?

U: Yes.

A: This platter is alike. Now, these are not antiques. (sorting new dishes from old)

U: The makers mark on them says, "Cambridge Semi-porcelain."

A: That was made in England.

U: It is a crown. Below it is a rope in a pretzel shape. It says, "New Whare Pottery, England." There is a "10" marked on the bottom, and a "709" impressed. It is a flo-blue transfer print.

A: These are four of the soup bowls, and there are three of the dinner plates.

U: These are beautiful.

A: That is an antique cake plate.

U: Did she have this, too?

A: This is, too. People didn't used to serve cake on the individual dishes. They sliced and arranged it around on a plate and passed the plate around. They let you put it on your own plate.

U: The soup bowls have an "810" and an "18" impressed on the bottom of them. Let me see if the maker's mark on the bottom is clear on some of them. The actual serving plates have a "1009" and a "13" impressed in them and a "17" stamped in green on them. They say, "New Whare Pottery, England." They can tell where plates came from by those kinds of marks. You said one of the Uithoven daughters. Do you know which one that is?

A: To my knowledge, he didn't have but one daughter. Now, Mrs. Uithoven had five children when she married him. The Kellers were her children. She had three boys, Thomas, Sherman, and David, and then she had two daughters, Nancy and Mary, when she married Dr. Uithoven. He had this one daughter and one son. His son's name was John, but I don't remember what her name was. She sold out; Mama bought all these dishes, some rugs, a washstand and a dresser. I don't know what all she bought from her household stuff.

U: Is this a cakeplate?

A: Yes, she had a bowl to match it. It got broken.

U: The cakeplate says, "Luxembourg, Germany." It has a small turreted castle on the bottom. It has roses embossed on it. It is hand painted, and has a dot embossed border on it. That's beautiful.

A: This is a set of china of which I have a full set for twelve. Norman brought me this from Japan when he was in the navy.

U: It says, "Nkrite China, from Japan." That is beautiful. Was this the china that you ate off of regularly?

A: Yes, Mama used it everyday. The year that Leroy, our youngest son, was born, there was a geologist from Texas who came here and was doing some study down on Tibbee for the oil companies. He brought his wife down there to our house. We lived down southeast of town then. He brought his wife down there and let her stay with us that afternoon while he walked on to the bottom. She saw these dishes of Mama's. She offered her a fancy price for them. Mama told her that she wouldn't sell them at any price. She gave her her card and told her, "If you ever decide to sell them, give me first choice on them."

U: They are beautiful.

A: Norman would have a fit if I sold them.

U: Were some of them broken when she got it?

A: Yes.

U: Do you know what the original amount of the place setting was?

A: It was for six. That's a moustache cup for people with moustaches to drink out of. That was my Granddaddy Marshall's, my mother's daddy.

U: That has a saucer.

A: Yes. He gave it to my daddy. We've just held onto it. See that cruet set up there with those three little stands. I can't reach them. That was my great-grandmother's. It belonged to my Great-grandmother Robinson on my mother's side. This is something that was Mama's. It was given to her full of powder when she was about four years old. It was a powder jar.

U: That's really pretty, too. It is a little cut glass bowl and a cover with a litte knob stem on the top.

Do you remember what your mother's glassware and table silver looked like?

A: I don't know what kind of metal it was made out of, but it was called bone-handled ware. It had bone handles. I can show you one of the forks.

U: The fork that you showed me of your mother's has a bone handle on it, and it is three tined. It is some sort of white metal.

A: You could polish it and it would look real bright.

U: Like silver?

A: Yes.

U: Do you remember what her drinking glasses looked like?

A: No, I sure don't.

U: Did you ever have tin plates or tin cups?

A: Yes, we children had tin cups to drink out of when we were little. I don't ever remember eating out of tin plates. We used to have tin cracker boxes. Had one-pound and two-pound boxes. Crackers came in barrels back in those days. Papa would take those cracker boxes back to town. When he bought them, he bought them full of crackers. Then you could take them back and get them refilled out of the cracker barrel. It kept the crackers just as fresh as anything you ever saw.

U: Were they plain, or were they painted?

A: Yes, they were painted blue and had a gold design on the

U: Do you remember any of the other things that were in her kitchen?

A: Well, she had a meal barrel and a flour barrel that she kept meal and flour in.

U: How big were they?

A: Well, one of them held a whole barrel of flour which is, I believe, a hundred and ninety-six pounds. Back in those days, you bought flour by the barrel because you didn't have any loaf bread unless you made it yourself. You didn't go to the store and buy a loaf of bread when you wanted bread. (laughter) It was go to the kitchen and cook it. Then she had what was called a half-barrel that she used for a meal barrel. She had wooden tops to go on them.

She used a big round sifter. It didn't have a crank to it. You shook it this way. I never could shake that flour and that meal through there. You had to sift all of your meal because it was home ground, and it had the husk in it. You had to throw all of that husk and chaff away, and sift the meal out of it.

U: Where would you go to grind corn into meal?

A: I just really don't remember who had the nearest corn mill next to us to which Papa would take the corn. He might have taken it to town and got it ground. I don't remember.

U: Would she keep spices?

A: Yes, she kept all kinds of allspice, cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, and lemon and vanilla flavoring.

U: What kind of containers were those in?

A: They were in little metal cans very much like they are now. Only the ones you get now have plastic tops. They were made out of tin, and they were bad to rust. If you kept them too long, they would rust. You'd have to throw it away, if you don't use a lot of it. The liquid flavoring was in bottles just like you buy now.

U: What were her cooking pans like?

A: She had enamel pots. They were some kind of cast iron and then covered over. They were enameled over. You see a lot of the skillets and things now that look like it. They were blue and white speckled. Her boilers and all were enamelware with a handle. The boilers would have a top shaped just like the boilers you have now. Most of them was either gray and white or blue and white. That was the two colors of the enamelware that they had then.

She had two thin iron skilletts. One was a used one about 10" across, and the other one was about 12" across. She had tin tops that fit them. She had a great, huge tin pan that fit the bottom of that big wrought-iron range, cookstove. She would bake that full of sweet potatoes. This wrought-iron cookstove had a warming closet up over it. It was divided into two parts. The top went back more like a rolling garage door. You could take it and raise it back, and it'd slide back in there. You could pull it down then.

U: To keep things warm?

A: You'd keep things warm up there all the time. You could cook anything and get it done early and set it up there over the heat. It would stay warm then until mealtime. She'd bake that pan of potatoes and put them up in that warming closet. When we'd come in from school, that was the first thing we'd head for, the cookstove and baked potatoes.

U: Did you have a special name for those potatoes?

A: He raised mostly Nancy Hall. Nancy Hall and Puerto Rica yams were the two varieties that he grew that I can remember.

Another incident that I remember when I was growing up concerned Payne Field during World War I. I'm sure you've heard of Payne Field where they had this fine school out here north of town. They have a marker out there for it. When they erected the marker here several years ago, they had a dedication ceremony, and every living pilot that they could find anywhere attended. There might have been two or three that were too ill of health to make the trip here. This Mr. Curtis Friday that you met over there who told you about me living out there at Vinton was one of the instructors at Payne Field. He worked that up. He got the addresses. He wrote to mayors, to Chambers of Commerce, and everywhere that he knew that these men lived. They were quite helpful in helping him locate these men that was still living. He wrote and sent them invitations. They and their wives attended; they had quite a ceremony. They had a big parade here in West Point, and then went on out to Payne Field and erected that marker. They have an organization that's called the Daedalians, which is all over the United States, not just at Payne Field. The ceremony was strictly for Payne Field. Of course, they were quite interested in it. It being the first place. . . .

My daddy had a big watermelon patch at home. There was a Negro that had a half-acre of watermelons planted over across Barton ferry, over there in the river bottom. Just about the time he laid them by, he took a notion he wanted to sell out and go to Gary, Indiana. He sold Papa that half-acre of watermelons for ten dollars. All Papa had to do was wait for them to grow and get ripe. That land out there produces watermelons like you never saw in your life. Those are the best melons that grow anywhere.

When time come to sell them. . . . I don't know who told Papa that he could sell them over at Payne Field. He'd hitch up the wagon at evening and load the melons on, and then get up and leave by daylight and get over there to Payne Field. The first time that he went in, he had to have a permit to go inside the gate. Afterwards when he went, they knew him. They always called him the watermelon man. He said he wouldn't have to get out and try to sell them. He said those boys would just gather around that wagon and take the last melon he had. If he didn't ask as much as a dollar and a quarter for them, they wouldn't have them. They thought they weren't any good.

He worked with them until he got tired. He had a Negro helping him. He told this Negro man, "If you want to fool with them, you can have my wagon and team. You can haul as many over there as long as they last and sell them. You give me half of it, and you can have the other half." He brought Papa nine hundred dollars. Papa say, "I have no way of knowing whether he give me half of it or not, but I was well satisfied with what I got out of my part of it.

U: Do you know where else he sold watermelons besides Payne Field?

A: No, if he ever sold any to anybody else, I never did know. Usually, all the neighbors around had watermelons of their own. If one happened not to have any, somebody would give them to them.

U: What did your mother do with trash?

A: Well, we usually had gullies on the place. We didn't have garbage like we do now; we didn't have all the papers. You hardly ever had things like all this junk mail that comes now. You didn't get a newspaper but maybe once a week. You didn't buy anything in tin cans to throw away. There wasn't any tin cans. You had maybe a few bottles. There was always gullies on the place that Papa wanted to fill up. He'd haul it off and put it in those gullies. He would burn the wastepaper in the fireplace and cookstove.

U: Where would you get a newspaper?

A: From West Point.

U: When you went into town to buy something?

A: No, it came out in the mail. They'd mail it out to us. You'd subscribe to it, and they'd mail it out.

U: You told me that before you moved to Eupora, you moved to another house that was about two miles down the road and lived there for a year.

A: That's where Coy and Andy Ellis lived. The last time I was out there the old house was still standing, but they were using it to

put hay in. It was so delapidated no one could live in it. They were using it to store hay in.

U: Was that on the Barton Ferry Road?

A: Yes, it was about half-a-mile this side of London Chapel Church. It would be on the left-hand side of the road going to the Barton ferry.

U: Yes, it is still standing.

A: The Zack Ellis place was right across the road from it. You went about as far as from our road out there past our drive, and you turned down that road that goes on down into Highway 50 and crosses Town Creek down there. Zack Ellis lived down that road just a little short distance.

U: Do you know who was living in that house before you moved into it?

A: No, I don't. Yes, I do too. The Freemans lived there.

U: Did you just live there a year?

A: Yes.

U: What did it look like when you lived there?

A: There was a porch come this way in an ell. There was a room out on that porch; the only way you could get into it was to go out on the porch and go into it. There was a big bedroom there with a fireplace on the end of it. There was a hallway they used for a sitting room in the summertime. Then a big bedroom was over on this end; it didn't have any heat in it. Back of the hallway was the dining room. Back of this other bedroom was a shed room that was a kitchen.

U: Was it a big place?

A: Yes.

U: Have you ever heard of anybody horse racing in Vinton?

A: No. If they ever had any horse races out there, it was before my time. (laughter) It was not during the time I lived there.

U: Would people be tempted to just challenge somebody else that had a horse to run down the road?

A: I couldn't tell you, because I never heard my daddy say anything about it.

U: Do you know Annie Wilson, who might have married William Foote?

A: Yeah, that was my daddy's sister; that was his oldest sister. She was next to Uncle John.

U: Do you know where they lived?

A: The first I ever knew of them, they lived in Alabama. Then they moved up to Bigby Switch, up towards Fulton. Those are the only two places I know of them living. I believe Lucille Nevels told me that Woodrow Dobson had promised to talk to you. His grandmother and my daddy was brother and sister.

U: Was his grandmother Annie Wilson?

A: Yes, she married William Foote.

U: Is she a sister to your father Dennis?

A: Yes.

U: We wondered because he calls all of your dad's brothers and sister, uncle and aunt. Do you know where the Footes were from? Do you know where she met William Foote?

A: No, I sure don't because all of their children were nearer Mama's and Papa's age, because of the fact that they were the oldest children and Papa was the third child from the bottom of thirteen. Uncle John married and moved away from home when Papa was born. He had children as old as my daddy.

U: Do you know an Ollie Wilson?

A: Yes, that was his sister too. She married a John Young, and they had two children, Tobe and Burkett. She died when they were real small; my mother and daddy took those boys and raised them until their daddy married again. He went several years before he remarried. They kept them four or five years. When he married again, he came and got them; they went back, but they never did forget us. When they got grown, they always came to our house and stayed. They maybe stayed for two or three months at a time.

U: When she married John Young, did they lived out there or somewhere else?

A: No, they lived up between Fulton and Amory, up in there.

U: You said one of their sons was named Tobe?

A: Yes, and Burkett.

U: Was one of your uncles ever called Tode or Tote?

A: Yes. Theodore was called Tode; they called him Tode Wilson. That's Lucille's daddy.

U: In a newspaper column, it said Mrs. Tode Wilson. Was that Mamie?

A: Yeah, that was her.

U: Do you know what Mamie's last name was?

A: Berry. She was a sister to Parolee. Parolee, who married Zack Wilson, and she were sisters.

U: Do you know where the Berrys are from?

A: They were from up around Aberdeen and over by Hamilton, over in that section.

U: Do you know where your Uncle Thomas lived before he moved in with you in your house?

A: He lived at Artesia.

U: Didn't he ever live in a house out in the Vinton area?

A: He could have. I don't know. He had forty acres of land right straight across the road in front of the schoolhouse, but it did not have a house on it, when I can remember. His wife died. I don't know whether the boy died before his wife or not, but anyway his son died. His children were Audrey and Clarence; you saw the picture of them. Clarence died, and then Aunt Ollie died. I don't know when, but Uncle Tom died when I was four years old. He had been at our house for three years down with heart trouble. Papa had all his expenses to pay, all his doctor bills and all his drug bills. They had to feed him and take care of him. Some of the brothers that lived out there wouldn't even. . . . Lucille's daddy lived right across the road; he wouldn't even come sit up with him. He deeded Papa that forty acres of land.

His wife's mother and two brothers were Ezells; they lived down at Artesia. They kept the daughter as long as they lived. I don't know when they left from Artesia or anything, but they went to Arkansas. They went to Watson, Arkansas first, and then they moved to Wilson, Arkansas. In the 1927 flood, they were washed away. They brought them to a refuge camp over here at Cleveland, Mississippi. Uncle Trannie and Aunt Annie Wilson went over there, and found their name in the list in the Commercial Appeal. They went over there and got them and brought them to their house. Then they brought them up to our house where they stayed awhile. They went back over there to where they had been washed away. They weren't on the Mississippi River; it was a tributary that they were on. They didn't fix the levees on that river. The next year the river rose again and ran them out. They moved to Greenwood, Mississippi. I don't know how, but by some pull Audrey got a job in the post office in Greenwood, and she worked in that post office until she died.

U: You told me that Lucille's dad, Theodore, lived in the stagecoach house after your grandparents died. Where did he live before that?

A: I don't know because they were living there when I could first remember. I don't know where. They moved from there to town.

U: Did you ever know any Gibsons out there?

A: Yes. Up in front of the Duke place. The Duke place was back off the road a little piece. Just as you turned in there, the Gibson house was over on the left-hand side of the road.

U: Did they have any kids?

A: Yeah, I'm sure they did. They were all older people. They had all passed away when I was big enough to remember, and all their children had moved out from there. But the place always went by the name Gibson place.

U: Do you remember who was living in it then?

A: Well, the first people that I can remember living in it was the Van Howard family; then Ed and Lilly Maude Wilson lived in it. After they lived in that house south of Mr. Ab Duke's they moved over in the Gibson house. Really that's the only two families that I ever remember living there.

Then over across another branch, back of that Gibson house, way over in there in some flatwoods, there was a house. That's where Mr. Tom and Mrs. Mary Brooks were living the night I was born. Uncle Tom Wilson went after Mrs. Mary Brooks. It was on Halloween night; it was dark and raining. It wasn't so cold, but it was just so nasty. The weather was so nasty. He had a lantern when he started out, and the lantern went out on him. I guess the rain put it out or something. He got lost going up there. He got to hollering, and Mr. Tom Brooks heard him. He says, "That's Tom Wilson hollering. I'm going to light the lantern and go to him. He's lost. He's coming after you." He told Mrs. Mary, "Get ready while I'm gone." He went to him with a lantern and brought him on home. He got Mrs. Mary and brought her on down there to our house for her to be there with Mama.

U: When women had children, was it common to have another woman to come and stay along with a doctor?

A: Yes. They had the doctor, but it was always common for some of the neighborhood women to come in, to bathe and dress the baby and everything when it was born. They would heat the water and do things like that.

U: Would the doctor usually be there?

A: Yeah. Mama had the doctor when all three of us children were born. Some people back in those days and up until this day have midwives and don't have a doctor, but she did. I told you about Dr. Darracott. He delivered me and Frank, but Mama went to Eupora when my oldest

brother was born. Her family had moved from Carroll County to Eupora in Webster County. She went down there about two months before he was born; she went on the train and stayed down there. Doctor Berryhill down there at Eupora delivered him.

Norman has a letter dated July 1907; that's the month when Jimmy was born. Papa wrote to Mama. Norman said to me that it's bound to be while my mama was down at my grandmother's when Jimmy was born." Mama had a lot of old letters and postcards and such as that. She had all this glassware, not the dishes but the glassware and things like that, packed in her trunk. Moving around, we didn't have room for them everywhere. When we moved out here, we had so little room before we built an addition onto the house, that we did away with her trunk. Norman got what he wanted out of it. He has an old china doll that was hers when she was a little girl.

U: Does he have any more letters and papers?

A: I don't know; he just told me about those that he had.

U: Did you ever know the Edens?

A: Yes, when I knew them, they lived on up towards Aberdeen, up in Monroe County. I just knew of them. I heard Mama and Papa talk about them, but I didn't know them personally, because I was too small.

U: Did you ever know anyone called Funderburke?

A: Yeah, real well. She was the one I told you about with the Sunday school; somebody would come play the organ and would get up a Children's Day program and everything. Well, she was the one who usually did it; she and the schoolteacher did it together. She played the organ and she could really sing. She'd come and play and sing. We used to go to their house often and spend the day, and they'd come to our house and spend the day.

U: Do you know where they lived?

A: No, they lived in a house somewhere on that road that I told you Zack Ellis lived on that went on down and crossed Town Creek and come out on Highway 50. They lived in a house down in there.

U: Before you get to Highway 50?

A: Yeah, before you get to Highway 50.

U: Do you remember which side of Town Creek it was on?

A: I think it was on the other side of Town Creek, between Town Creek and Highway 50. I'm pretty sure it was.

U: Do you remember what Mrs. Funderburke's first name was?

A: I can't remember her name. I can remember going to her house after they moved to town. Do you know where Harry Bandy's junkyard place is right out here?

U: No.

A: Do you know where this auction place is right across the street from the Walker's Tire Store?

U: Yes.

A: Well, there was a big two-story house there, and they lived there for years. Andy Ellis and them lived right up in back of where Smith Seed Company is now. It used to be the first house, but they've built a brick house in there now. The first house that stood there was where Andy and them moved to after they left the farm out in the country and moved to town. The Funderburkes and the Ellises lived right close together. We visited both of them. We children were always down there because they didn't have any children, and they just thought the world of us.

One thing I can remember about them was their table. It was the only one I ever saw in my life. They had a dining table which was what you call a turntable, a lazy susan. There was a piece about a foot wide which was solid and stationary. Then the center of that table was raised about two inches, and it turned. They set all the food on that turntable, and when you wanted anything, you didn't have to ask for it. You just turned the table and helped yourself.

U: How many people could sit at that table?

A: Yeah, it was a huge table; I expect she could seat ten people at it. It was a huge table.

U: Was it a big house that they lived in?

A: Yeah, it was a big two-story house. She kept boarders.

U: Was there anybody named Miller who lived in that house, too? Did she have any family named Miller?

A: Not that I know of. Miss Sarah Miller, that taught school, lived on the road that goes to Highway 50 towards Columbus, before you get to the road where you turn off to go up across Town Creek. They lived on that road.

U: Did you ever know any Millers that lived to the north, like in the Monroe County area, just across the line?

A: No, but there were some Bradleys lived up there; Bradleys still do live there. You were talking about a part of an old house standing that may be an original house. My brother Frank said that the only old original house that he knew of was up there at Olive Maude

Bradley's. She was a first cousin to Velma, Frank's first wife. They moved this house. I don't know where they moved it from, but it was somewhere in the vicinity. They moved it up there to Early Duke's. He was a Duke and a brother to Mr. Ab Duke. Ab Duke was Velma, Lilly Maude, Homer, and all of them's daddy. Early had two daughters, Irene and Olive Maude. Irene was retarded and Olive Maude always took care of her. Olive Maude married a Bradley, the one that owned the Chevrolet place in Aberdeen. He died a few years ago. He was several years older than she was, and he died with a heart attack. There was a lot of the Bradleys. I never did know all of them because I was little and not that close to them. When they lived that far from you, you didn't visit them like you do now. You wouldn't think anything about going fifteen or twenty miles to visit somebody now, but to go that far then, you had to go in a horse and buggy. You just didn't go visit them like you do now.

U: How many people could sit in your dad's buggy?

A: It was just a one-seated buggy with a back end to it, kind of a boxlike thing. They usually put a cushion or something in there, and my brother Jimmy usually rode back there. I'd ride down in front of them on their feet. They'd set a little stool or something there, and I could ride down close to the dashboard. Mama would hold Frank in her lap.

U: Did you hitch one horse or two horses to it?

A: Just hitched one horse to it.

U: Did your dad have a buggy and a wagon?

A: Yes, had both a wagon and buggy. He had this real gentle mare that he'd let us children ride; we could ride her without a bridle or anything in the world. As small as we were, he wasn't afraid for us to hitch her up and go anywhere in the community that we wanted to go.

U: Last time I asked you about some funny things that had happened to you. Have you thought of any more funny things that ever happened when you lived out there?

A: Well, my daddy raised a lot of goats, and he would sell them to people to barbeque through the summertime. A lot of people in the community would get together and have a big barbeque, and he would sell them a goat. He had them across the river. The water rose when we got ready to sell them. The water kept rising on the river. He had a Negro worked one whole week moving them to higher ground everyday. They'd go back the next day and some of them were in water, and they'd have to move them to higher ground. They finally moved ninety-seven head across the river and brought them home. He sold them.

While we were raising them before he took them across the river, we had this big old billy. Jimmy was chasing him one day. Mama told him

he had better quit, because if he didn't the billy was going to get him. Sure enough Jimmy didn't quit, and the old billy turned on him and butted him down, just butted him good. Mama had to go out and get the billy off him. We could hitch this billy goat to a cart to pull us all around. We'd ride in it. He was so big.

U: What kind of little cart was it?

A: It was more like a little wagon like children have.

U: Would you harness him up?

A: Yeah, he made some harness. Then you could buy leather in strips. Papa was always buying leather to mend his harness or maybe to make a piece of harness out of. He made some harness to fit this billy goat.

Sometimes, something would happen to the old nannies so that they wouldn't let their babies nurse after they brought them. We'd take them and raise them on a bottle. While they were young and all, we thought they were cute. Us children would have something to play with. We'd let them come in the house and stay a little while. One time one of them butted the reservoir. It saw itself in the reservoir of the stove, and thought it was butting another goat.
(laughter)

U: (laughter) It could see itself?

A: Yeah, you could see yourself in that reservoir just like a mirror.

U: What was it made out of?

A: It was nickel on the outside. Mama always kept it polished. You could take soda and polish it with soda. You used soda to polish things then like you use Comet and Ajax now. While Papa had them over across the river, somebody shot this old billy's nose off. Papa killed him and got the horns. He sold one of them to somebody. I don't remember who. He kept the other one and was going to have it dressed off to make a hunting horn. He had it after we moved to Eupora, and somebody stole it. There wasn't but two people in the community that Papa had ever showed it to, so he said it was bound to have been one of the two that got it.

Another time, something came and jumped on our big collie dog at night while we were sitting at the supper table. Mama got up and took a lamp in her hand and carried it to the back door to see. They were right in the backyard gate; the gate was standing open. The dog and the panther was just sitting there looking at one another growling up a storm. Mama went to the door with that light, and we pushed in under her to see, too. That panther started towards her like it was going to jump on her. She was trying to get us back so she could slam the door shut. (laughter)

Another time, my brother and myself was taking these wire stretchers back over to the Whatleys. They lived back over towards White Station. We went through these flatwoods, and the road was just a dirt country road. It was old post oaky land. There wasn't a ditch on either side of the road, just a little bank about eight inches high on each side. This rattlesnake was laying across the road with its tail on one bank and its head on the other. The mare stepped on it, and the buggy wheels rolled over it. My brother got out. He couldn't find a long stick anywhere so he picked up chunks and chunked that snake to death. It was bound to have had its back broken by the mare stepping on it and the wheels running over it. It never did coil up to strike. If it hadn't had a broken back, as much as he chunked it, it would have coiled up and struck at him. They tell me that they always coil up before they strike anything.

U: What are wire stretchers?

A: They are stretchers that you use to stretch barbed wire from one post to the other. You fasten them to the post and then fasten the wire to them; they've got handles that you pull. It pulls that wire real tight. Then you take the staple and hammer and drive the staple into it and go on to the next post. Maybe you can stretch it along two or three posts and go along and nail it. It's just owing to how your land lays.

U: What kind of barbed wire did you have?

A: We had the same kind of barbed wire as now, only better. They made a lot better barbed wire than you have now.

U: Stronger?

A: Yes, a lot stronger. It had more barbs to the inch and they were bigger and longer. The wire was of a heavier gauge. Most of the wire you get now is little tiny wire. Most of the time all I ever saw my daddy buy was four-ply wire; it was four wires twisted together and then it had that big barb on there out of that heavy wire. It really stayed there. If you'd get some good posts that would last, you'd have a fence that would stay there for years and years to come.

U: You said you were going to the Whatley place; is that on the road that goes west just past the school?

A: Yeah. It goes on towards White Station. But there's a road that turns off of that road and comes back down in there to the Barton Ferry Road right at the east end of Town Creek bridge. It's no further than from here to the road out there to the end of Town Creek bridge.

U: And he lived in there someplace?

A: Yeah, he lived on past the road that turns and comes into Town Creek bridge.

- U: Did he live on the north side or the south side of the road?
- A: He lived on the north side. The Mealers and the Whatleys all lived over there.
- U: Was there ever a store back there?
- A: Not that I ever remember. If they ever had one, it was before my day.
- U: We're talking about the Joe Harris house. How would I get to that house?
- A: It's not standing; there's no house there. The road's even closed up; there's no road through there. The road's all closed up. The road used to turn off there and go through to the Uithoven's place.
- U: Did there used to be a road that came off of the Vinton Road that he lived on?
- A: Yeah, it was right off the Vinton Road.
- U: What did that house look like again?
- A: It was just a two-room house. You'd build two rooms and box them off. It had a double fireplace, which opened into each room. I've forgotten how many children they had; I can't remember the boy's name; Minnie Lee, though, was the girl's name. Then they had two little girls that weren't big enough to go to school when we moved away from there. We lived at Eupora twelve years. We moved up above here about ten miles on up this road, when we moved back to Clay County. They were grown in that length of time and had gone away. He was living over on the river in one of those camphouses by himself.
- U: Do you know who his wife was?
- A: No, sure don't. She was dead when they moved there when I first knew them.
- U: Do you remember any other houses up this dirt road that goes up to Uithoven's?
- A: No, I don't remember any more houses. That Uithoven house up there was where Doc Uithoven's daughter was living when Mama bought those dishes. That's where they came from, from that house.
- U: His wife was previously a Mrs. Keller. Do you know where she lived?
- A: No, I don't have any idea. Tom Keller is the only one of them living, and maybe David. I don't know. David moved away from here. He was the youngest boy and the youngest child. I don't know whether he's dead or not, but Thomas is living. His mind is real bad. If

he had a good mind, I expect he could tell you more about Vinton and all of that out there than anybody. The last time that we saw him, his mind was real bad. I don't know whether he could tell you all that much or not.

U: Was the Harris house north or south of this road that runs east and west?

A: It was north of it.

U: (using the Michael Baker Vinton map) This outside road is the Vinton/Aberdeen Road. This is the road that comes in through Vinton down to the river.¹ The cemetery would be right here. The house that Lucy Natchez¹ lived in is this building right here. This would be the road that goes down to the river past Lucy Natchez's. There is another road just a little bit north that comes down to the river crossing Millstone Creek; this is Millstone Creek here. Is the road that the houses are on north of here yet?

A: Yeah, because our house is bound to be north of here along with the Vinton schoolhouse and everything. It's in the bend up there where it turns and goes back west.

U: Okay, so it's way north of here yet?

A: Yeah, where we lived. They didn't really get the main part of Vinton because the Vinton schoolhouse was Vinton.

U: Is this where the Poss family lived, across from the cemetery?

A: Yeah, it would be right in there, because right up between Miss Lucy's house and the road was where that house stood.

U: Do you remember another house north of it?

A: No, I don't. At one time, just a mile south of our house, a big house stood there, but it was before I was born.

U: On which side of the road?

A: It was on the left side going up the road; it was on the same side our's was on. It was a big house with four big chimneys to it. It was just four big rooms and four big chimneys. There was a big chimney in each room. It came a cyclone late one evening. I believe that Papa said it was just half-a-mile from our house. It blew that house away. It blew the chimneys away, and just left the floor and the bricks level with the floor. That was everything it left. All it done at our house was drop a few shingles in the yard.

Uncle Zack Wilson lived back over behind the old stagecoach house, southeast of us. He was right in the line of it. It struck his

¹Also spelled Natcher, Nacher, Natural, and Natchell.

house. They had left and come to our house just before it struck. Papa and Mama was sitting at the supper table. They knew it was coming up a cloud, but they didn't know it was that bad. They looked out and saw them coming. They said, "Well, there come Zack and Parolee and Willie and Ed." Uncle Zack come in, and he was just scared to death. He says, "There's a cyclone coming. You can see it way back yonder in the west." Papa says, "We'll blow out all the lamps." They'd lit the lamps, because it was beginning to get first dark. Papa says, "Put the fire out in the cookstove." Mama says, "Well, I can't pour too much water in the stove, because it'll burst it." He says, "Well, put out all the fire you can, so there wouldn't be anything to set fire." They stood there at the windows and watched it blow that house away.

U: Did he ever tell you who lived there?

A: There was a family of Negroes; I don't remember who they were.

U: Was anybody injured?

A: An old Negro man got a lick on the head. It wasn't too serious. It hurt him a little bit. He was the only one that got hurt in it.

U: If this is the road that comes into the Natchez house, did you ever know of any house right down south of it, along the Vinton Road on the east side?

A: No, the next house down below her house would be where the Harrises lived turning in down there.

U: Was there an empty stretch there pretty far?

A: Yeah. It was all in woods. There's been some roads put in there, and some camphouses been built in there. There's several Negro houses along that road there now. It's just been changed so much since I was little. It just doesn't look like the same country.

U: Do you remember this great big tree at Lucy Natchez's house?

A: Yeah, I remember it.

U: Did the Poss house have a lot of trees around it like this aerial photo shows now?

A: No, no trees at all. Right down in there, between the Poss house and the Natchez house, there was a kind of a hollow. That may be where that pond has formed from. That was an overflowing well. They had a big huge iron washpot that the water ran into for the stock to drink out of. I bet it was as big as this table.

U: Is that in an open area just east of the Poss house?

A: It could be all grown up in trees now, as far as I know, because it's been several years since I've been out there.

U: Is it in a low area?

A: Yeah, right down from both of these houses; it's in a low area.

U: Can those iron pots burst?

A: Yeah, unless this water overflowing into it all the time might have kept it from freezing.

U: The last time you were up there, were either one of these little ponds here, this one that's just north of the cemetery or the one that's behind Lucy Natchez's house?

A: If they were, I didn't know it. They could have been; that one would be a good distance from the road. Now, this one wouldn't.

U: Yeah, you can see this one from the road now.

A: There's a pool right close to the road that belongs to Henry Watson, Jr., and that could be it. I thought his place was before you get to the Lucy Natchez place. His house is before you get to the cemetery.

U: Do you remember any house in here where these new houses belonging to Cooperwoods, Moores, and Montgomerys are?

A: No. That Joe Harris house sits in there.

U: It's a little farther south than those new houses.

A: Yeah. It's the only one that I can remember ever being there.

U: Did this road that goes past Lucy Natchez's house go all the way down to the river when your were a kid?

A: No.

U: It goes all the way down.

A: No, that's been put in there since we lived there. They put it in there to those camphouses. L. B. McEachin and Henry Watson were the first two people that ever built camphouses out there on that river. They were the only two that was out there in that vicinity. There was some further up in the river and some further down the river. Now, they're almost as thick as they are on the street. (laughter) Didn't know who they belonged to or anything.

U: Leroy, have you ever been out in there hunting, or out in there much at all?

A: He doesn't hunt. His daddy does enough for both of the boys and then some.

U: There are some old standing buildings and some house sites up in there that no longer have houses on them. I was just wondering if anyone could tell us if those are camphouses or old house sites?

LA: How about Frank?

A: Frank don't know because Frank moved away from there when he wasn't but three years old.

LA: Yes, but he probably knows where the camps are.

A: That road, I'm sure, is new because I don't remember a road above this one past Lucy Natchez's.

U: Do you know if Levi Hollins used to live anyplace up near where your Uncle Zack used to live?

A: No, he lived over there. Do you know the house I told you about where Mr. Tom and Mrs. Mary Brooks lived across Millstone Branch? They lived there before Mr. Tom and Mrs. Mary Brooks did. That's where they lived. Since you asked me about a blacksmith, it seems to me that Levi Hollins was a blacksmith.

U: Do you know if that house is still standing?

A: No, I know it's not, because it was so old and delapidated when I was a little girl. That's been a long time ago.

U: Do you remember anything besides the pomegranate tree there?

A: That wasn't the place; that was old Uncle Zack's house place which would be somewhere in down southeast of our house. This map doesn't include where our house is and Vinton schoolhouse. There was a road that went in there; I don't think there is any sign of the road now.

U: Were you inside Lucy Natchez's house?

A: Yeah, I been there lots of times. We always went into the room where she kept this boy. I was never over the rest of the house. I don't really know how it was arranged.

U: What did that room look like inside? Do you remember any of the furnishings in it?

A: No, I sure don't. I only know she had him in a rolling chair.

U: Did it have wood wheels on it?

A: Yes. It was wood frame. Most of them now are metal and plastic and all. It was a wood frame. It might have had metal wheels, but probably wood spokes to it like a buggy wheel. She had a buggy

with a top on it that she carried him riding in all the time. She took him out riding everyday. They had curtains to the buggy. I'm sure you don't remember them; you're not old enough. Have you seen the old Model-T with the curtains to them?

U: Yes.

A: The top buggies and surreys was two seated. Some of them were called surreys, and some of them were open surreys that didn't have a top. Some of them had a top, and then they had curtains like the old Model-T Ford's. You could put them up in the wintertime. She had curtains up.

U: Was what she had a buggy, not a surrey?

A: Yeah, she had a buggy with just one seat for two people to ride in. She had curtains to go up so that she could take him out if it was raining or bad weather. Of course, if it was too terrible or freezing bad, she didn't take him out. Days that were suitable to get out, she got out and took him riding around over the country.

We called her Cassie.

U: You called Mary Foote, Cassie?

A: Yes. James McGraw did marry Cassie Foote, and 1912 would be about right for the time they married. He is still living; he is in the Care Inn nursing home.

U: Is he just ill?

A: He's ill; he had a leg amputated here not long ago. W. B. Foote married Sadie Thrailkill.

U: Did the Thrailkills live out there anywhere?

A: No, they lived up near Aberdeen. They were kin to Mr. Ab Duke, Velma and Lilly Maude's daddy. Barney Cogsdell had a brother. I was trying to study the other day what his name was. Dan Cogsdell, that must be him. He must have married Mattie Lee Champion.

U: Is B. C. Barney Cogsdell?

A: Yeah, that's Barney Cogsdell.

U: Did you know Annie Kehl?

A: No, but I knew her daddy.

U: What was her dad's name?

A: Charlie. He was our mail carrier for years and years. We used to send him buying our groceries. When you got out of groceries, you

put your list in the mailbox for your mailman to go to a certain grocery store and pick up something out of the grocery and bring them to you. He didn't charge you for it. (laughter)

U: That's pretty nice; they wouldn't do that today.

A: (laughter) They wouldn't lick a stamp for you today.

U: Do you know where he lived?

A: He lived over here at town.

U: Do you know if Barney Cogsdell and his wife Annie Kehl lived out there in Vinton?

A: Yeah, they lived out there. They had two children, Hattie and Allen. Hattie is this Mrs. Mabel Kisner's mother. Barney Cogsdell is her granddaddy. His daughter was named Hattie Cogsdell, and she married a Holmes. Mabel was Mabel Holmes before she married a Kisner. I didn't know Dan Cogsdell. I had seen Barney a few times when I was real small, but I don't remember much how he looked or anything.

There was another funny thing. Uncle Trannie's boy and Allen Cogsdell were about the same age. Grandpa Wilson was down sick over at his house and a bunch of them was sitting up over there with him. Mrs. Cogsdell or Barney was over there with the children and Aunt Annie was there. They had some beehives out there. The boys went out there. They said they wanted to see the bees on the roost. They turned the beehive over, and it like to have stung those boys to death. I can remember Mama telling about that. She said, "You never saw two boys stung as bad as they were."

U: What did you put on bee stings to help the swelling?

A: They used some carbolic acid on them. They'd wash them in carbolic acid water. Of course, they didn't have room deodorizers and things then. Sickrooms, when you're down sick a long time. . . . It seems to me like they said my grandfather had typhoid fever or something. I don't know. Anyway, he was down sick a long time. They had a dish of carbolic acid sitting under the bed to take up the odors. They weakened it and bathed him in that carbolic acid. Leroy's got some sting kill ampoules here. You just crush that thing and rub on it. That's the best thing for them. Household ammonia is good for them.

LA: It neutralizes them. The acid pulls the poison out.

U: Do you know if Barney Cogsdell was ever married more than once?

A: I don't think so. If he was, I never did hear my mother and daddy say anything about it. He died when those children were relatively

small. They just lived around among anybody in the community that would take them. They'd go to say our house and stay two or three days and pick up and go to somebody else's house and stay two or three days. If he ever married again, I never did know anything about it. This Annie L. Kehl could have been his second wife. If they married in 1910, that was just a year before I was born, and Hattie and Allen both were older than I am.

U: Nobody remembers Annie Kehl.

A: Well, it'd have to be Charlie Kehl's daughter because there was so many of them; I think he had ten girls; every child he had was a girl. They was hoping for a boy somewhere along the line, but every one of them was a girl. I'm sure if he married her in 1910, he was married before because Hattie was older than I am. I'm sixty-eight; I was born in 1911.

U: Okay, thank you very much.



Figure 10. The Dennis Wilson home, ca. 1905. Dennis Wilson, Mary Marshall Wilson, and Henry Wilson.



Figure 11. Irene Wilson Armstrong and her brother Henry. Photo taken in the yard of the Dennis Wilson home. Photos courtesy of Irene Armstrong.



Figure 12. Dennis Wilson and Zack Ellis.

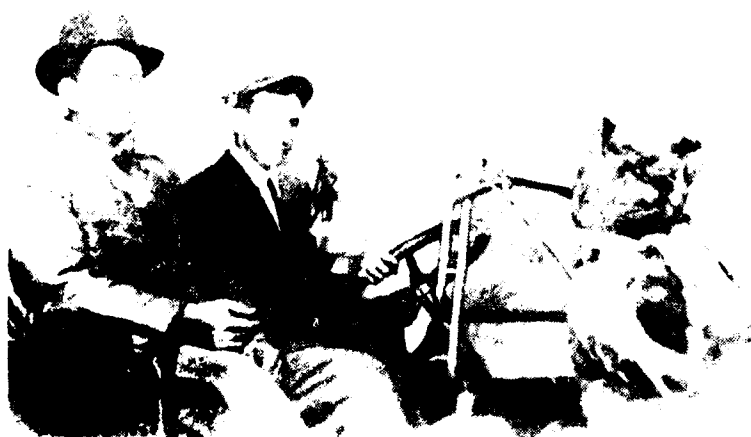


Figure 13. Dennis Wilson and Mr. Carey.
Photos courtesy of Irene Armstrong.



Figure 14. Mary Marshall Wilson with her children, Jimmy and Irene. Photo taken in the yard of their home.



Figure 15. Mary Marshall Wilson in her yard. Photos courtesy of Irene Armstrong.



Figure 16. The first rocking of the Barton Ferry Road. Riding the horse is the road engineer, Mr. Carey.



Figure 17. A view of the Barton Ferry Road at the first rocking, 1904. The road is in the foreground.

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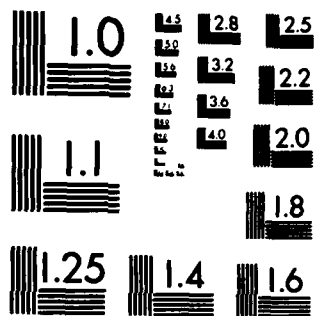
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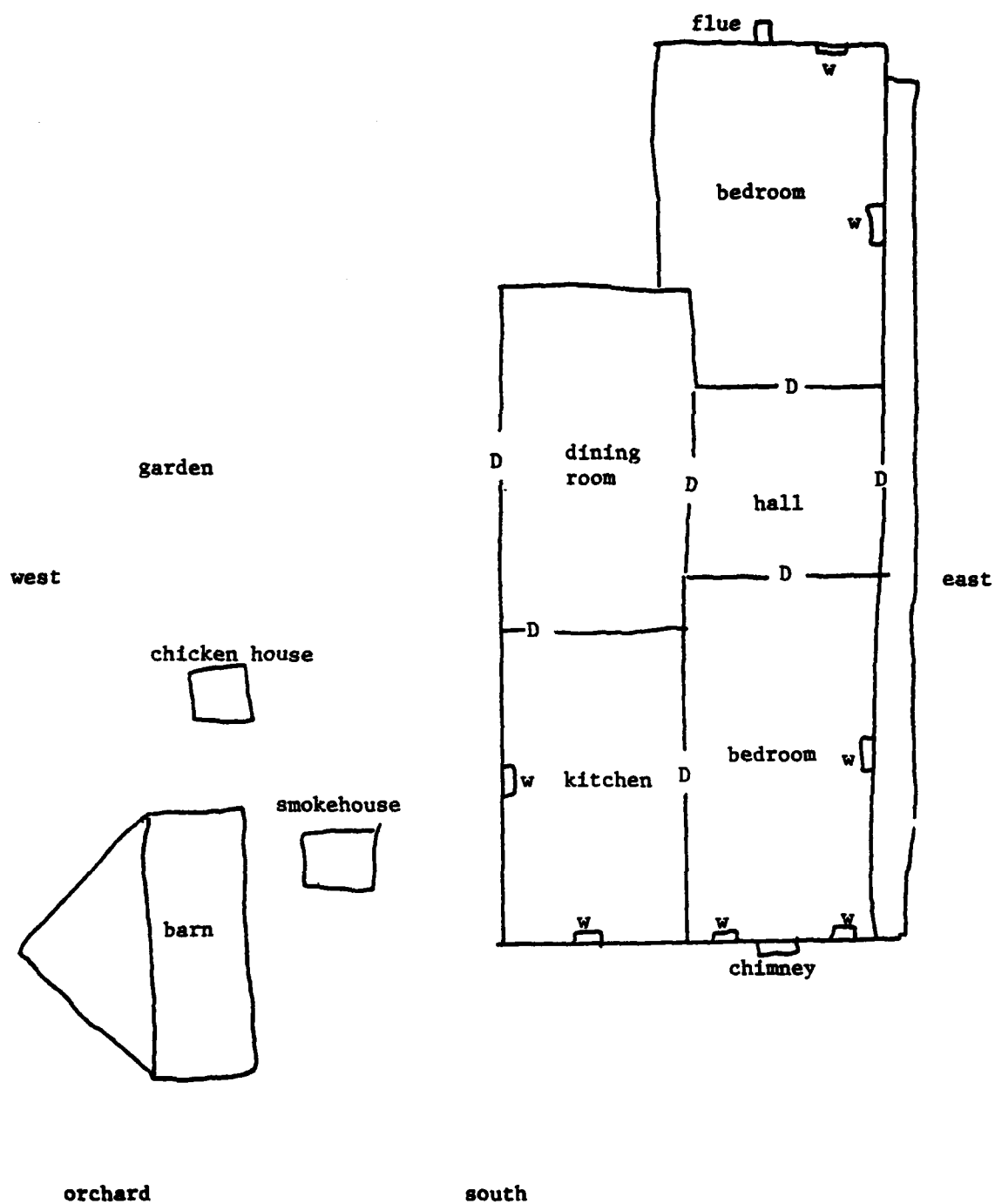


Figure 18. Floor plan of the Dennis Wilson house. Drawing by Irene Armstrong.

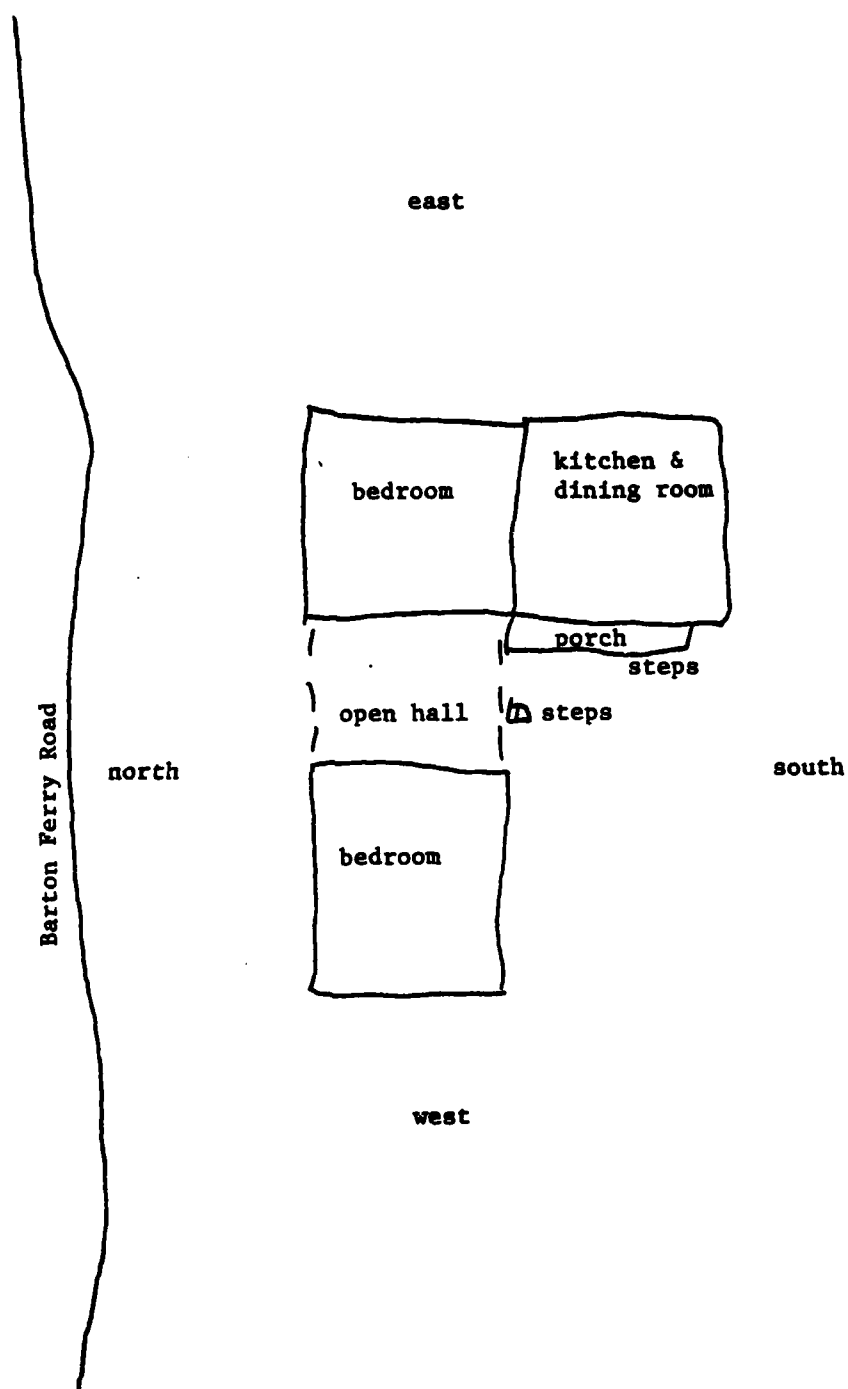


Figure 19. Floor plan of the Trannie Wilson house. Drawing by Irene Armstrong.

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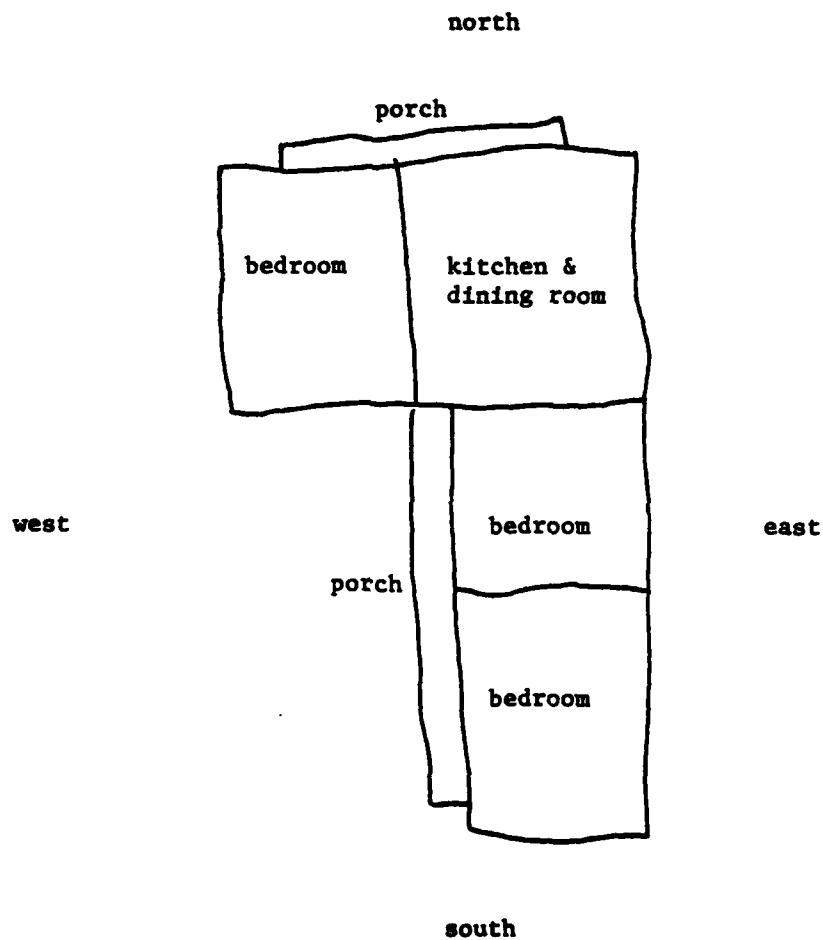


Figure 20. Floor plan of the Henry Wilson house. Drawing by Irene Armstrong.

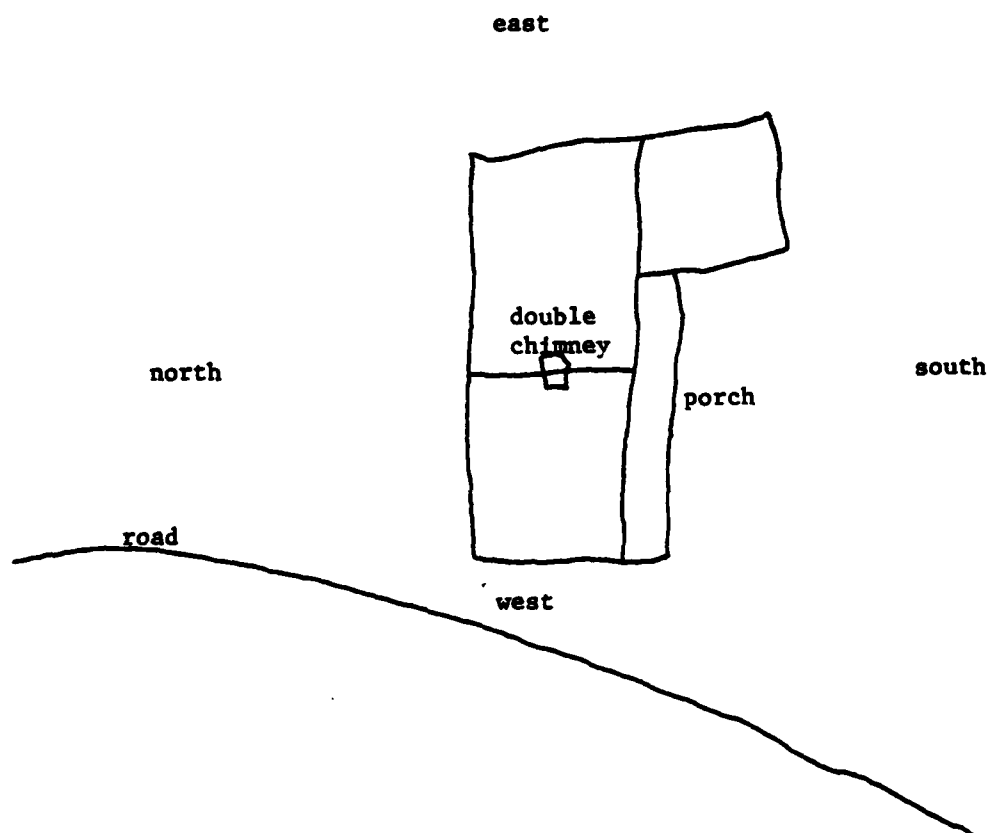


Figure 21. Floor plan of the Poss house. (previously the Vinton general store) Drawing by Irene Armstrong.

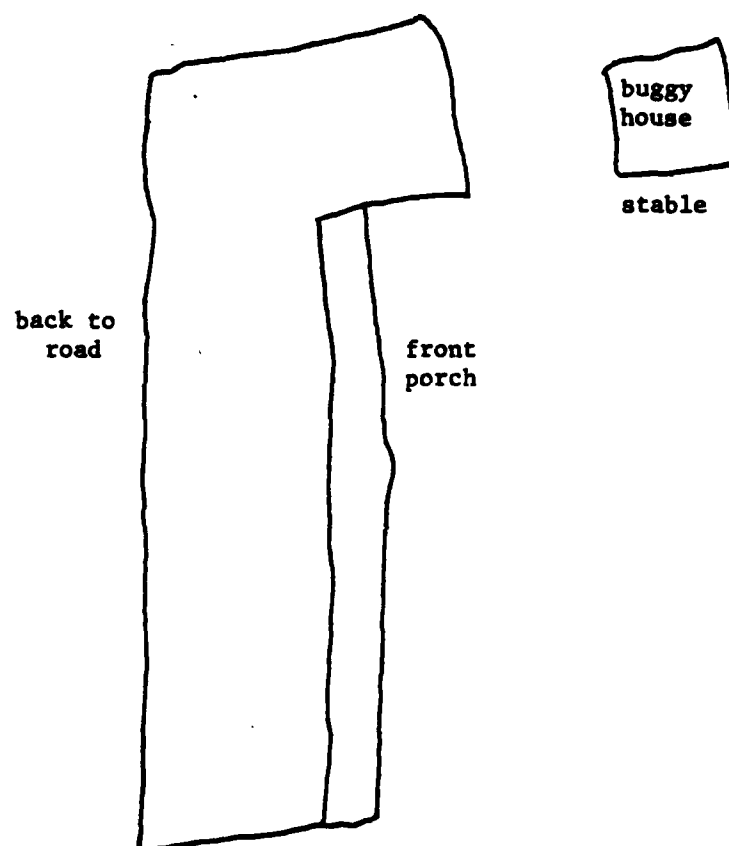


Figure 22. Floor plan of the Lucy Natcher house. (also known as the Trotter or Watson house) Drawing by Irene Armstrong.

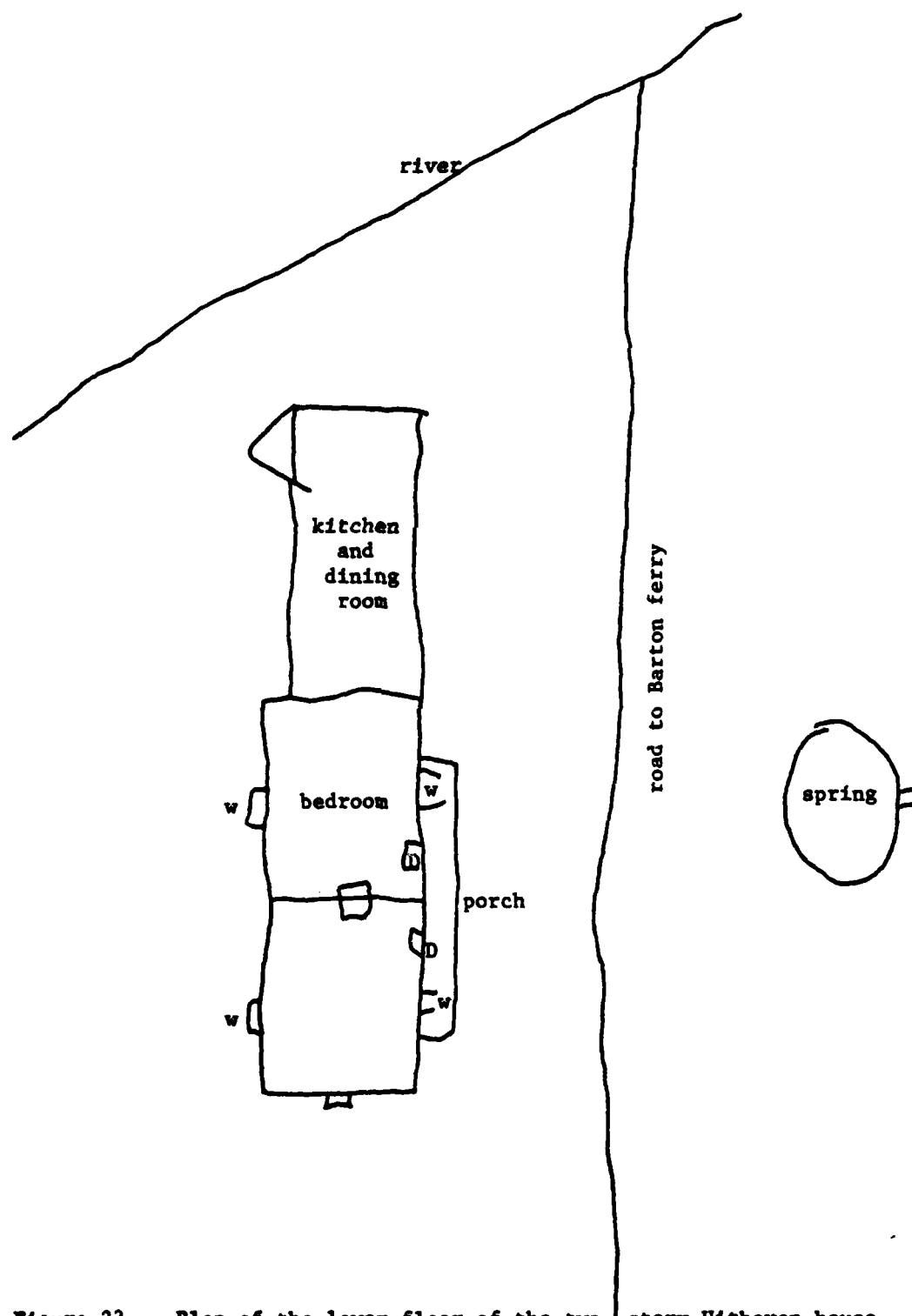


Figure 23. Plan of the lower floor of the two story Uithoven house at the Barton ferry landing. Drawing by Irene Armstrong.